

Pastor's Handbook

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EDITORS

The Board of Bishops

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PASTOR'S HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is designed to assist pastors to understand and implement their ministry as defined by the mission and polity of the Free Methodist Church. For day-to-day use it serves as a helpful companion to the *Book of Discipline*.

Those who are inquiring about the nature of pastoral ministry in the Free Methodist Church, those who are presently preparing for ministry in the church or those who are beginning their pastoral work are urged to read paragraphs A/500 through A/506 of the *Book of Discipline* entitled "The Ordained Ministry." These pages will define the nature of pastoral ministry and the qualifications for the same as understood by the Free Methodist Church.

The practical design of this *Handbook* gives immediate access to a variety of worship aids. Duplicates may easily be photocopied for participants.

The binding is designed for pulpit use and easy pocket storage.

We commend this book to you with the prayer that God will bless its use to the good of both you and your people.

The Board of Bishops

CHAPTER I
THE PASTOR AS LEADER OF WORSHIP
SCRIPTURE IN WORSHIP - THE LECTIONARY

A Guide for Selecting Scripture Lessons
During the Church Year

The Study Commission on Doctrine, at the request of the General Conference of 1979, prepared the following lectionary for the Free Methodist Church of North America. Adopted at the 1985 General Conference, it was first published in the 1986 edition of the Pastor's Handbook.

A lectionary is a collection of Old Testament and New Testament Scripture lessons arranged to guide worship across the church year. It guarantees broad exposure to all parts of the Scriptures by setting forth lessons keyed to the church year. The church year, meanwhile, unfolds basic Christian teaching in an orderly fashion by moving through the stages of our Lord's life. Together a lectionary and church year guide the congregation in edifying worship of God.

The historic church developed its own calendar over many centuries. The gospel story provided the pattern. In keeping with this tradition, this lectionary organizes the Scriptures to center around Jesus Christ.

The Christian year has five seasons, each with its own emphasis:

Advent and Christmastide — the birth of God's Son;

Epiphany — the ministry of God's Son;

Lent — the death of God's Son;

Easter — the resurrection of God's Son;

Pentecost — the Holy Spirit, the gift of God's Son.

A close study of the seasons shows that the church year can be divided into two major parts:

Advent through Easter focuses on God's work through His Son during His earthly life.

Pentecost centers on God's continuation of our Lord's work through the Spirit's ministry.

Beginning early in her history, the church created lectionaries to guide in worship. Both the church year and the lectionaries gradually grew more complex. After the Reformation, Protestant churches adopted, to varying degrees, the calendar and lectionaries. Liturgical churches kept them quite generally, making their own adaptations here and there. Nonliturgical churches abandoned them almost entirely.

The Free Methodist Church has been influenced both by liturgical and nonliturgical Protestantism. John Wesley, the father of

Methodism, was a member of the Church of England. All his life Wesley observed morning and evening prayers found in the *Book of Common Prayer*. But the free church movement from the other end of the Reformation has also influenced the Free Methodist Church. Many fear that any planned approach will imperil worship's true nature. This fear is unnecessary for those willing to seek a balance between order and spontaneity. Because these two approaches are in our history, Methodism at its best provides for order in worship that leaves opportunity for response to the Spirit's leadership.

The Free Methodist lectionary has adapted the Common Lectionary to correspond to the emphasis of the denominational calendar.

This lectionary draws on the time-tested wisdom of the church universal. It also has distinctive features. On the one hand, it includes the seasons of the historic church year and, for each Sunday, suggests lessons from the different parts of the Bible. This is in keeping with the church's ancient teaching that the Scriptures, within a rich diversity, have a profound unity. Based on a three-year cycle, the lectionary includes much of the New Testament and a great many Old Testament texts. At the same time, it pays special attention to passages that emphasize the God-given concerns distinctive of historic Methodism.

Pastors must decide exactly how to use the Scripture lessons. There may be Sundays when local needs require a departure from the lectionary altogether. They will discover, however, that the lectionary, rather than binding them, actually frees them to develop their own services by focusing their attention in a particular direction. They will, of course, have to go on from there and in preaching determine precisely how to apply the Scripture lessons to local needs. This will require much prayer and careful study.

Some pastors may choose not to use the lectionary. If they do so, they must remember that they are responsible as worship leaders to see that the Scriptures are covered in the worship services of their congregations. There are a few leaders who on their own can assure that across the year their congregations are widely and systematically exposed to the broad sweep of Scriptures. Most pastors, however, simply do not have the time or resources needed to develop such a plan. Those who do not will wisely consider what the lectionary has to offer.

God has given the church His book — the Holy Scriptures, unique in all world history. His Book is a trust. God has also given leaders to the church, ordained and appointed to teach and preach the message of His Book in its broadest sweep and to lead His people in public

worship. This lectionary offers those leaders assistance in the form of a simple guide which allows both Word and Spirit to have full sway in His church.

THE USE OF THE LECTIONARY

Pastors will need to examine the lectionary thoroughly. This first reading should include attention to the scope of each season, the unity of the themes within a season, and the movement of passages through consecutive Sundays. Pastors who have grasped the lectionary's plan will be in a good position to use it.

Here are some suggestions. Pastors should make sure their congregations regularly hear the unity of the Scriptures' message through its various witnesses. Reading at least two lessons in the morning worship service enlarges the impact that God's Word can make. This, in fact, draws on our heritage, for the 1910 hymnal of the Free Methodist Church suggested that an Old Testament and a New Testament lesson be read in each worship service.

Approaches most certainly will vary. Pastors may use the whole of the scripture lessons or abbreviate them. They may follow the lessons in the morning and veer from them in the evening in favor of personal selections. Beyond these options, portions from a psalm (which are not included in the three-year cycle) may be read in the call to worship or elsewhere.

Pastors may discover that preaching through a book of the Bible is valuable. Others may find helpful alternating between following a book series (for example, in Pentecost) and following the church year and lectionary.

Those who would like to join other Free Methodist churches in reading the same scripture lessons weekly can follow this rule. If the sum of the digits is divisible by three, use the lessons for year A. For example, since the sum of 2001 equals 3, a number divisible by 3, the church year 2001/02 would follow the lessons for A. Then 2003/04 would follow the lessons for B, and so on. This rule applies only for the third millennium.

Those less mathematically inclined, may use the following chart:

Year A: Advent 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019

Year B: Advent 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020

Year C: Advent 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018

Below are two samples of the ways in which the lessons for Trinity

Sunday A (Pentecost I) can be used.

Call to Worship, Ps 90:1-2

Scripture Lessons, Gen 1:26-2:3; Mt 28:16-20

Sermon Lesson, 2 Cor 13:5-14

Call to Worship, Ps 90:1-4, 12

Scripture Lesson, Mt 28:16-20

Sermon Lesson, 2 Cor 13:5-14

ADVENT AND CHRISTMASTIDE

The name Advent implies that the Lord has “come to” us in the Christchild. Advent themes, therefore, deal with His birth, the coming in the flesh of God’s Son, its prediction in Old Testament prophecy, its preparation in Old Testament history, the people involved, and the marvel of His coming. The Advent season and readings also focus on our readiness to receive the King, our expectancy, and our patience.

Theme	Psalms	Year	First Lesson	Second Lesson	Gospel
I. Preparation	24;1:84 5	A	Isa 2:1-5	Rom 13:11-14	Mt 24:36-44
		B	Isa 63:16b-64:8	James 4:1-10	Mk 13:32-37
		C	Jer 33:14-16	1 Thess 5:1-6	Lk 21:25-36
II. The Prophet	50:1-15	A	Isa 11:1-10	Rom 15:4-9	Mt 3:1-10
		B	Isa 40:1-11	2 Pet 3:8-14	Mk 1:1-8
		C	Mal 3:1-4	Phil 1:3-11	Lk 3:1-6
III. The Prophet’s Message	2:46;3; 21:45	A	Isa 35:1-10	James 5:7-12	Mt 11:2-11
		B	Isa 61:1-3,8-11	1 Thess 5:12-24	Jn 1:6-8,19-28
		C	Zeph 3:14-20	Phil 4:4-9	Lk 3:7-18
IV. David’s Son	80:85; 89:1-4, 38-52;132	A	Isa 7:10-14	Rom 1:1-7	Mt 1:18-25
		B	2 Sam 7:8-16	Rom 16:25-27	Lk 1:26-38
		C	Mic 5:1-4	Heb 10:5-10	Lk 1:39-45 or 1:46-55
Christmas (Eve)	118;8;148	A	Isa 9:2-7	Titus 2:11-15	Lk 2:1-20
		B	Isa 62:11-12	Titus 3:4-7	Jn 1:1-18
		C	Isa 52:7-10	Heb 1:1-6	Lk 2:1-20
Christmas I	145;138; 111;150	A	Isa 63:7-9	Gal 4:4-7	Mt 2:13-19
		B	Isa 45:18-19, 22-25	Col 3:12-17	Lk 2:21-24
		C	Jer 31:10-14	Heb. 2:10-18	Lk 2:36-40
January I	81;90;147; 103	A	Num 6:22-27	Eph 5:8-20	Mt 13:47-52
		B	Ecc 3:1-15	2 Cor 5:16-6:2	Jn 21:20-25
		C	Deut 8:1-10	Heb 12:1-6,11-13	Lk 14:15-24
Christmas II	121;66;72	A	Prov 8:22-31	Eph 1:3-10	Jn 3:22-30
		B	Ex 34:1-7	Eph 1:11-14	Lk 2:25-35
		C	Job 28:20-28	1 Cor 1:18-25	Lk 2:41-52

EPIPHANY

Epiphany refers to the appearance of God in the ministry of His Son. The Epiphany season opens with the stories of the visit of the Magi, and Jesus' baptism, the event that inaugurated His ministry. It concludes with His transfiguration, an event in which God witnessed to His Son. The Epiphany season usually extends well into February, our Compassion Month. Jesus' ministry provides an excellent model for our compassion. Old Testament passages that describe God's care for the poor and the oppressed give us a pre-Christian model of mercy.

Theme	Psalms	Year	First Lesson	Second Lesson	Gospel
I. The Epiphany	19;93;35	A	Isa 42:1-7	Acts 10:34-38	Mt 3:13-17 or 2:1-12
		B	Isa 60:1-7	Acts 11:4-18	Mk 1:4-11
		C	Gen 1:1-5	Eph 3:1-6	Lk 3:15-17, 21-22
II. Ministry	23;100;11; 40	A	Isa 49:1-6	1 Cor 1:3-9	Jn 1:29-34
		B	1 Sam 3:1-10	1 Cor 6:12-20	Jn 1:35-42 or 1:43-51
		C	Isa 62:1-5	1 Cor 12:4-11	Jn 2:1-11
III. Proclamation	125;55;68; 105;7	A	Amos 3:1-8	1 Cor 1:10-17	Mt 4:12-23
		B	Jonah 3:1-5,10	1 Cor 7:17-23	Mk 1:14-20
		C	Neh 8:1-4a,5-6, 8-10	1 Cor 12:21-31	Lk 4:14-21
IV. Clear Teaching	1; 119:1-16; 32	A	Zeph 2:3;11-13	1 Cor 1:26-31	Mt 5:1-12
		B	Deut 18:15-20	1 Cor 8:1-13	Mk 1:21-28
		C	Jer 1:4-10	1 Cor 14:1-5, 12-19	Lk 4:22-30
V. Sharing	61;104; 111;147	A	Isa 58:6-10	1 Cor 2:1-5	Mt 5:13-20
		B	Job 7:1-7	1 Cor 9:16-23	Mk 1:29-39
		C	Isa 6:1-8	1 Cor 15:1-11	Lk 5:1-11
VI. Healing	38;6;41	A	Deut 30:15-20	1 Cor 3:1-9	Mt 5:27-37
		B	2 Kg 5:1-14	1 Cor 10:31-11:1	Mk 1:40-45
		C	Jer 17:5-10	1 Cor 15:12-20	Lk 6:17-26
VII. God's Love	102;101; 14	A	Lev 19:1-2,11-18	1 Cor 3:10-17	Mt 5:38-48
		B	Isa 43:18-25	2 Cor 1:18-22	Mk 2:1-12
		C	Ex 34:29-35	Eph 2:1-10	Lk 6:27-36
VIII. Liberating	125;55;68; 105;7	A	Isa 49:13-18	1 Cor 4:1-5	Mt 6:24-34
		B	Hos 2:14-20	2 Cor 3:1-6	Mk 2:18-22
		C	2 Sam 5:1-5	2 Cor 3:12-18	Lk 6:39-45
IX. The Trans- figuration	90;47;48	A	Ex 24:12-18	2 Pet 1:16-19	Mt 17:1-9
		B	Dan 7:9-10,13-14	Rev 1:4-8	Mk 9:2-9
		C	2 Kg 2:1-12	2 Cor 4:3-6	Lk 9:28-36

LENT

Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word “to lengthen” and refers to the gradually lengthening days of that time of year, early spring. In this season, we remember the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the climaxing acts of the gospel. Traditionally, Lent has been a time of abstinence for forty days (though fasting is not practiced on the six Sundays that fall during that period). Our Lord fasted for forty days before He began His public ministry, and His example shows that God can use us in a special way when we turn aside from the routine of life and wait before Him.

Although we believe that self-denial belongs to all seasons of the Christian year, this is an excellent time to call for full surrender and total obedience. Lent naturally focuses on the final days of Jesus’ earthly ministry and His sacrificial death. It concludes with Holy Week, and our churches often participate with other communions in community services. Many Old Testament scriptures fit naturally into the Lenten season, such as those explaining the plan of atonement, uttering prophetic calls to repentance, and setting forth the examples of great Hebrews who gave their lives totally to God’s service.

Theme	Psalms	Year	First Lesson	Second Lesson	Gospel
I. Repentance	106:51; 69:39	A	Joel 2:12-19	2 Cor 5:16-6:2	Mt 6:1-6, 16-18
		B	2 Chron 7:11-16	James 1:12-18	Mk 2:13-17
		C	Zech 7:1-10	1 Cor 9:24-27	Lk 5:27-32
II. Testing	4:62;139; 42-3	A	Gen 2:7-9;3:1-7	Rom 5:12-19	Mt 4:1-11
		B	Gen 22:1-14	1 Pet 3:18-22	Mk 1:12-15
		C	Deut 26:5-11	Rom 10:8-13	Lk 4:1-13
III. Trusting God’s Promise	67;140;14	A	Gen 12:1-8	Rom 4:1-8	Jn 4:4-26
		B	Gen 28:10-17	Rom 8:31-39	Mk 9:14-32
		C	Gen 15:5-12,17-18	Gal 5:1-6	Jn 5:1-15
IV. The Way of the Cross	26:142; 141:32	A	1 Sam 15:16-23	Rom 6:1-11	Mt 16:21-28
		B	1 Sam 16:4-13	1 Thess 4:1-12	Mk 8:27-9:1
		C	Dan 3:1-6,16-18	Gal 5:16-26	Lk 14:25-33
V. The Narrow Way	20:63;138	A	Gen 13:5-13	Rom 6:12-23	Mt 7:13-20
		B	Deut 11:16-32	Phil 3:7-14	Mk 4:1-12
		C	Hos 6:1-3	Gal 6:1-10	Jn 13:1-5 12-17
Palm Sunday	21:3; 7:88	A	Isa 50:4-7	Heb 3:1-6	Mt 21:1-11
		B	Zech 9:9-12	Phil 2:5-11	Mk 11:1-11
		C	Isa 59:15b-20	1 Tim 1:12-17	Lk 19:28-40
Maundy Thursday	25:26; 27:28	A	Ex 12:1-11	1 Cor 11:23-32	Mt 26:36-46
		B	Deut 16:1-8	1 Jn 2:1-6	Mk 14:12-26
		C	Ex 12:21-28	1 Cor 5:6-8	Lk 22:14-34
Good Friday	10:17;22; 31:34	A	Isa 52:13-53:12	Heb 4:14-5:10	Mt 27:31-50
		B	Lev 16:7-10, 29-30	Heb 10:11-18	Jn 19:16-37
		C	Lam 1:8-12	Rev 5:6-14	Lk 23:26-49

EASTER

Easter is the high point of the church year, when we celebrate Christ's triumph over sin, death, and hell. His resurrection also becomes the model for the Christian's transformation in the "new birth" and for the entire world's future transformation in the "new creation." The ascension of our Lord took place ten days before Pentecost. Thus, the season includes Christ's resurrection, exaltation to heaven, intercession for Christians, and the promise of the Holy Spirit. We can also turn back to Old Testament passages that describe the triumph of God such as the Exodus and psalms that proclaim "the Lord reigns." While Lent is a time for reflection, confession, and commitment, Easter is a season of joy, confidence, anticipation, and power.

Theme	Psalms	Year	First Lesson	Second Lesson	Gospel
I. Easter	58:29;	A	Isa 43:1-3a	Col 3:1-11	Mt 28:1-10
	118:135;	B	Isa 25:1,6-9	1 Pet 1:3-9	Jn 20:1-9
	18	C	Ex 15:16	1 Cor 15:20-28	Lk 24:1-12
II. Appearance	114:27;29;	A	Acts 2:42-47	1 Pet 1:3-9	Jn 20:24-31
	50	B	Acts 3:1-10	1 Jn 5:1-6	Mt 28:11-20
		C	Job 42:1-6	Rev 1:9-13,17-19	Jn 21:1-14
III. Power of Resurrection	110:97;99	A	Acts 2:22-32	1 Pet 1:17-21	Lk 24:13-35
	47	B	Acts 3:13-19	1 Jn 1:1-2:2	Lk 24:36-49
		C	Acts 5:27-32, 40-42	1 Cor 15:35-49	Jn 21:15-19
IV. The Good Shepherd	64:72;2;	A	Acts 2:36-41	1 Pet 2:19-25	Jn 10:1-10
	21	B	Acts 4:8-12	1 Jn 3:1-3,7-10	Jn 10:11-18
		C	Acts 13:42-52	Rev 7:9-17	Jn 10:22-30
V. Life in Christ	30:28;	A	Acts 6:1-7	1 Pet 2:4-10	Jn 14:1-12
	145	B	Acts 9:26-31	1 Jn 3:18-24	Jn 15:1-8
		C	Acts 14:21-28	Rev 21:1-5	Jn 11:17-27
VI. The Promise of the Spirit	116:23;	A	Acts 8:4-8,14-17	1 Jn 2:18-25	Jn 14:15-21
	68:1-20;	B	Acts 11:19-30	1 Jn 4:1-6	Jn 15:9-17
	49	C	Acts 15:1-2, 22-29	Rev 21:10-14, 22-23	Jn 14:23-29
VII. Ascension	96:45;48	A	Acts 1:1-11	Eph 1:16-23	Jn 17:1-11
		B	Acts 1:6-14	Heb 9:11-14	Jn 17:12-19
		C	Acts 1:15-26	Heb 19:19-25	Jn 17:20-26 or Lk 24:44-53

PENTECOST

The name for Pentecost comes from the Old Testament festival of the firstfruits. In the New Testament it refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit which God sent to the church on the day of Pentecost. In this long season, then, we think about the present ministry of His Spirit both within the church and in the world. Old Testament passages concerning God's dealings with Israel, His church in the pre-Christian era, belong in this season. The themes of the twenty-fourth through the twenty-seventh Sundays after Pentecost could appropriately be used during the Free Methodist Church's "Festival of Praise" in early November.

Theme	Psalms	Year	First Lesson	Second Lesson	Gospel
I. Pentecost	73;91:34; 46	A	Joel 2:28-32	Acts 2:1-11	Jn 15:26-16:4
		B	Ezek 37:1-3,11-14	Acts 2:1-11	Jn 7:37-39
		C	Gen 11:1-9	Acts 2:1-11	Jn20:19-23
II. Trinity	90;93;114; 8	A	Gen 1:1-2,26-2:3	2 Cor 13:5-14	Mt 28:16-20
		B	Deut 6:4-9	Rom 8:12-17	Jn 16:12-15
		C	Isa 6:1-8	Rom 5:1-5	Jn 3:1-17
III. Heeding God's Word	31;19;56	A	Deut 11:16-21	Rom 3:21-28	Mt 7:24-29
		B	Deut 5:6-21	2 Cor 4:7-12	Mk 2:23-28
		C	1 Kg 8:41-43	Gal 1:1-10	Lk 7:1-10
IV. Judgment for Sin	50;5;11	A	Hos 6:3-7	Rom 4:13-25	Mt 9:9-13
		B	Gen 3:8-15	2 Cor 4:13-5:1	Mk 3:29-29
		C	1 King 17:17-24	Gal 1:11-24	Lk 7:11-17
V. The Message & Messengers	3:14;78; 97	A	Ex 19:2-6	Rom 5:6-11	Mt 9:35-10:8
		B	Ezek 17:22-24	2 Cor 5:1-10	Mk 4:26-34
		C	2 Sam 12:1-10	Gal 2:11-21	Lk 7:36-50
VI. God's Sovereignty	12;13;71;2	A	Jer 20:7-13	Rom 5:12-15	Mt 10:26-33
		B	Job 38:1-11	2 Cor 5:11-21	Mk 4:35-41
		C	Zech 12:7-10	Gal 3:23-29	Lk 9:18-24
VII. War Within	51;106;109	A	Isa 2:17-22	Rom 7:14-25	Mt 10:37-42
		B	Gen 4:3-10	2 Cor 7:8-12	Mk 5:1-13
		C	Deut 15:7-11	Galo 5:1,13-18	Lk 9:51-62
VIII. Christian Freedom	36;4;131	A	Zech 9:9-10	Rom 8:1-11	Mt 11:25-30
		B	Ezek 2:1-5	2 Cor 12:7-10	Mk 6:1-6
		C	Isa 66:10-14	Gal 6:12-18	Lk 10:1-9
IX. Christian Values	39;76;117	A	Isa 55:10-13	Rom 8:18-25	Mt 13:1-9
		B	Amos 7:12-17	Eph 6:10-20	Mk 6:7-13
		C	Deut 30:9-14	Col 1:1-14	Lk 10:25-37
X. God's Freedom	10;74;75; 96;137	A	Isa 44:5-8	Rom 8:26-30	Mt 13:24-30
		B	Jer 23:1-6	Eph 2:11-18	Mk 6:30-34
		C	Gen 18:1-10a	Col 1:21-28	Lk 10:38-42

XI. Prayer	34;115;4	A	1 Kg 3:5-12	Rom 8:31-34	Mt 13:44-52
		B	2 Kg 4:1-7	Eph 4:1-8	Jn 6:1-15
		C	Gen 18:20-32	Col 4:2-6	Lk 11:1-13
XII. God's Liberality	54;89:1-18; 126	A	Isa 55:1-3	Rom 8:35-39	Mt 14:13-21
		B	Ex 16:2-4,12-15	Eph 4:17-24	Jn 6:25-35
		C	Eccl 2:17-26	Col 2:6-10	Lk 12:13-21
XIII. God Reveals Himself	9;70;113; 129	A	1 Kg 19:9b-18	Rom 9:1-5	Mt 14:22-32
		B	1 Kg 19:1-9a	Eph 4:29-5:2	Jn 6:41-51
		C	Gen 15:1-5	Heb 11:1-3,8-12	Lk 12:32-40
XIV. Testing	58;33;79	A	Isa 56:1, 6-8	Rom 11:13-16; 28-32	Mt 15:21-28
		B	Prov 9:1-6	Eph 5:15-20	Jn 6:51-59
		C	Jer 38:1-13	Heb 11:4-6; 32-40	Lk 12:49-53
XV. God's People	77;99;144	A	Ex 6:2-8	Rom 11:33-36	Mt 16:13-20
		B	Josh 24:1-2	Eph 5:21-33	Jn 6:60-69
		C	14-18 Isa 66:18-23	Heb 12:18-24; 28-29	Lk 13:22-30
XVI. Pure Religion	101;5;59	A	Jer 15:15-21	Rom 12:1-8	Mt 16:21-28
		B	Deut 4:1-8	James 1:19-27	Mk 7:1-8, 20-23
		C	Prov 22:1-9	Heb 13:1-9	Lk 14:1, 7-14
XVII. Rebuking and Forgiving	93;141;95	A	Ezek 33:7-11	Rom 13:8-10	Mt 18:15-20
		B	Ezek 33:12-20	James 2:1-5	Mk 7:31-37
		C	Prov 9:8-12	Philemon 8-17	Lk 15:1-10
XVIII. Acceptance	60;40;123; 124;130	A	Gen 50:15-21	Rom 14:1-8	Mt 18:21-35
		B	Isa 55:6-9	James 2:14-18	Mk 8:27-35
		C	Ex 32:7-14	1 Tim 1:12-17	Lk 15:11-32
XIX. Servant Leadership	133;134;135	A	Isa 55:6-9	Phil 1:21-27	Mt 20:1-16
		B	Jer 11:18-20	James 3:13-18	Mk 9:30-37
		C	Amos 8:4-7	1 Tim 2:1-8	Lk 16:1-13
XX. God's Justice	53;82;83;94	A	Ezek 18:25-29	Phil 2:1-11	Mt 21:28-32
		B	Num 11:24-30	James 5:1-6	Mk 9:38-50
		C	Amos 6:1-7	1 Tim 6:11-16	Lk 16:19-31
XXI. The Family	127;128	A	Isa 5:1-7	Phil 3:12-4:1	Mt 19:1-12
		B	Gen 2:18-24	Heb 2:9-11	Mk 10:2-12
		C	Heb 1:2-3;2:2-4	2 Tim 1:3-12	Lk 17:5-10
XXII. God's Provisions	62;49;52	A	Isa 25:1, 6-9	Phil 4:10-13, 19-20	Mt 22:1-14
		B	Prov 3:13-20	Heb 4:12-13	Mk 10:17-27
		C	2 Kg 4:8-17	2 Tim 2:8-13	Lk 17:11-19
XXIII. God's Servants	42;3;108;44	A	Isa 45:1-7	1 Thess 1:1-5a	Mt 22:15-21
		B	Isa 53:10-12	Heb 5:1-10	Mk 10:35-45
		C	Gen 32:22-32	2 Tim 3:14-4:2	Lk 18:1-8
XXIV. The Great Commandment	15;98;1	A	Ex 22:21-27	1 Thess 1:4-10	Mt 22:34-40
		B	Jer 31:7-9	Heb 5:11-6:3	Mk 10:46-52
		C	Deut 10:14-22	2 Tim 4:4-8, 16-18	Lk 18:9-14

XXV.	41;107;122	A	Mic 3:5-12	1 Thess 2:7-13	Mt 23:1-12
Responsibility		B	1 Kg 17:7-16	Heb 7:23-28	Mk 12:28-34
of Leaders		C	Ex 34:4-9	2 Thess 1:3-5, 11-12	Lk 19:1-10
XXVI.	87;16;84	A	Lam 3:22-26	Rom 15:1-13	Mt 5:13-20
Festival of Praise		B	Deut 26:16-19	1 Thess 4:13-18	Mk 5:21-24a,
		C	Isa 1:10-20	Col 2:13-23	35-43
					Lk 7:40-50
XXVII.	37;86;146;120	A	Lam 3:22-26	Rom 15:14-22	Mt 5:43-48
Festival of Praise		B	Amos 5:1-4; 14-15	Eph 6:10-20	Lk 5:1-11
		C	Prov 11:5-11	1 Cor 13:1-13	Lk 6:12-19
XXVIII.		A	Mal 3:6-12	Rom 15:23-33	Mt 6:5-15
Festival of	17;85;143;130	B	Lev 18:1-5; 19:18	3 Jn 1-8	Jn 4:27-38
Praise		C	Prov 28:18-28	1 Cor 15:58-16:4	Lk 6:20-26
XXIX.		A	Ezek 34:11-17;	1 Cor 15:2--28	Mt 25:31-46
Last Sunday	23;45;47	B	23-24	Rev 1:4b-8	Jn 18:33-37
Christ the King		C	Dan 7:13-14	Col 1:11-20	Lk 23:35-42
			Jer 23:2-6		

SPECIAL SUNDAYS

Psalms	Year	First Lesson	Second Lesson	Gospel
113;23	A	1 Sam 1:1-3,9-11, 19-28	2 Jn 1-6	Mt 15:21-28
	B	Prov 31:10-31	2 Tim 1:3-7	Jn 2:1-11
	C	Ruth 1:1-9,14-18	Acts 16:11-18	Jn 19:25-27
37;30;130	A	Jer 31:31-34	Rom 5:1-11	Mt 5:1-20
	B	Ezek 36:24-32	Rom 8:9-17	Lk 9:23-27
	C	Isa 1:18-20	1 Thess 5:16-24	Jn 15:1-8
127;8	A	Ex 13:11-16	Heb 12:4-13	Mt 21:28-32
	B	Eccl 12:1-14	Eph 6:1-4	Mk 10:13-16
	C	1 Sam 3:1-10	1 Tim 4:12	Lk 2:41-51
44;114; 127;37	A	Gen 28:19-22	Heb 11:11-19	Mt 1:18-21,24-25; 2:13-15
	B	Josh 4:1-7,19-24	1 Jn 2:12-17	Mk 9:17-25
	C	1 Sam 2:27-36	Acts 10:24,30-33	Lk 15:11-31
33;67;9	A	1 Sam 8:6-8	Rom 13:1-7	Jn 19:8-16
	B	Dan 2:19-23,36-45	1 Tim 2:1-8	Mk 12:13-17
	C	Deut 28:1-6	1 Pet 2:11-17	Lk 1:68-79
29;92;150	A	1 Chron 16:23-26	Gal 1:1-9	Mt 8:5-13
	B	Isa 55:1-5	Rev 3:14-22	Jn 17:6-11
	C	Isa 49:8-13	Rev 7:13-17	Jn 17:20-26
32;133;5	A	Hab 2:1-4	Rom 3:21-28	Mt 11:25-30
	B	Ex 33:12-17	Rom 1:16-17	Jn 3:13-21
	C	Isa 30:15-21	Heb 11:1-6	Lk 18:9-14
112;23;65; 136	A	Deut 26:1-11	Gal 6:1-10	Mt 7:7-12
	B	Isa 40:25-31	Phil 4:4-7	Lk 17:11-19
	C	Deut 7:6-9	2 Cor 9:6-15	Jn 4:43-54

THE CALENDAR AND THE SEASONS

The dates, Christmas, Epiphany Day, and Easter, serve as the reference points for all other dates in the church year. Here, in brief, is the historical background on how these dates were established.

Easter was the beginning point. The Gospel accounts report that Jesus' death and resurrection occurred during the Passover festival in the first month of the spring. Because the Jewish calendar follows the lunar month rather than the solar year, the Passover season can vary by several weeks. Thus, like Passover, the date for Easter is also movable.

Christmas, on the other hand, always occurs on a fixed date. We have no way of knowing from the Gospel accounts when, in the Jewish year, Jesus was born. The selection of the date evolved in the church's battle with Mithraism, a pagan religion that flourished in the early centuries of this era. Many Christians were tempted to join the annual feast in honor of Mithra, which occurred at the time of the winter solstice. The church, to give an alternative, substituted the festival of the birth of Christ.

Early in the second century, Christians celebrated both the birth and the appearance of God's Son on January 6, Epiphany Day, which coincided with their observance of the winter solstice. By the fourth century, the date for the winter solstice was moved to December 25, and the church separated the observance of Jesus' birth from that of His appearance which continued to be celebrated on January 6. This was done to insure that Christians would reject "adoptionism," a heresy that taught that Jesus was born as any other man and was only adopted as God's Son at the time of His baptism.

The church year opens with the Advent season, beginning on the Sunday nearest to November 30. Epiphany always begins on January 6. Easter is "the first Sunday after the full moon on or after the first day of spring, March 21, or if the full moon is on Sunday, the next Sunday after." From here the following rules apply. Advent and Christmastide have five or six Sundays, four before Christmas Eve and one or two after. There are from four to nine Sundays after Epiphany Day.

Lent begins on the forty-sixth day before Easter and always has six Sundays. The Easter season always has seven Sundays. And for the remainder of the church year, there are from twenty-three to twenty-eight Sundays after Pentecost Sunday, the fiftieth day after Easter (counting inclusively).

Church Year	First Sunday in Advent	First Day of Lent	Easter	Pentecost
1997/98	Nov. 30	Feb. 25	April 12	May 31
1998/99	Nov. 29	Feb. 17	April 4	May 23
1999/00	Nov. 28	Mar. 8	April 23	June 11
2000/01	Dec. 3	Feb. 28	April 15	June 3
2001/02	Dec. 2	Feb. 13	March 31	May 19
2002/03	Dec. 1	Mar. 5	April 20	June 8
2003/04	Nov. 30	Feb. 25	April 11	May 30
2004/05	Nov. 28	Feb. 9	March 27	May 15
2005/06	Nov. 27	Mar. 1	April 16	June 4
2006/07	Dec. 3	Feb. 21	April 8	May 27
2007/08	Dec. 2	Feb. 6	March 23	May 11
2008/09	Nov. 30	Feb. 25	April 12	May 31
2009/10	Nov. 29	Feb. 17	April 4	May 23
2010/11	Nov. 28	Mar. 9	April 24	June 12

CALLS TO WORSHIP

The first words heard by worshipers who come from the distractions of everyday life should direct their attention toward God.

These timeless expressions from Scripture will inspire adoration and praise far more readily than spontaneous comments offered by the leader, well intended as they may be.

In some instances a brief statement to prepare the people may be helpful, such as: “Hear God’s invitation to worship.” Or “Welcome to the house of the Lord. Let us join in divine worship.”

Or “The words of [cite the author] call us to worship.”

Then should be read with feeling and clarity one of the following passages or one carefully selected to fit the order of worship. A wise pastor will make notations of each use to avoid undue repetition.

Instead of one reader, you may create responsive calls to worship from any of these. Usually two statements by both the reader and all the congregation make for a good balance. Start with the reader and end with the congregation. Here are a few examples of how to make a responsive call to worship:

ONE: Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.
ALL: Before the mountains were born or brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.
ONE: May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us;
ALL: Establish the work of our hands for us — yes, establish the work of our hands.

Psalms 90:1-2, 17

ONE: Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
ALL: Let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
ONE: Let us come before Him with thanksgiving;
ALL: And extol Him with music and song.

Psalms 95:1-2

ONE: Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name;
ALL: Make known among the nations what He has done.
ONE: Sing to Him, sing praise to Him,
ALL: Tell of His wonderful acts.
ONE: Glory in His holy name;
ALL: Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

Psalms 105:1-3

ONE: Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
ALL: His greatness no one can fathom.
ONE: One generation will commend Your works to another;
ALL: They will tell of Your mighty acts.
ONE: They will speak of the glorious splendor of Your majesty,
ALL: And I will meditate on Your wonderful works.

Psalms 145:3-5

ONE: Praise the Lord.
ALL: Praise God in His sanctuary;
ONE: Praise Him in His mighty heavens.
ALL: Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!

Psalms 150:1, 6

SAMPLE CALLS TO WORSHIP

General

But I, by Your great mercy will come into Your house; in reverence will I bow down toward Your holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies, make straight Your way before me.

Psalms 5:7-8, NIV

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.

Psalms 24:34, NRSV

Wait for the Lord; be strong, and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Psalms 27:14, NIV

I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together. Those who look to Him are radiant.

Psalms 34:1, 3, 5a, NIV

Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.

Psalms 34:3; 36:9, NIV

Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; He is to be revered above all gods.

Psalms 34:3; 1 Chronicles 16:25, NIV

Send forth Your light and Your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to Your holy mountain and to the place where You dwell. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight.

Psalms 43:3, 4, NIV

Praise awaits You, O God, in Zion; to You our vows will be fulfilled, O You who hear prayer, to all (people) will come.

Psalms 65:1-2, NIV

Blessed are those who You choose to bring near to live in Your courts! We are filled with the good things of Your house, of Your holy temple!

Psalms 65:4, NIV

Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for You judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.

Psalms 67:34, NRSV

My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh cry out for the living God.

Psalms 84:2, NIV

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Satisfy us in the morning with Your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. May Your deeds be shown to Your servants, Your splendor to their children. May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us, yes, establish the work of our hands.

Psalms 90:12, 14, 16-17, NIV

It is good to praise the Lord and to make music to Your name, O Most High; to proclaim Your love in the morning and Your faithfulness at night.

Psalms 92:1-2, NIV

Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His land.

Psalms 95:6-7

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, praise His name; proclaim His salvation day after day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous deeds among all the peoples! For great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise.

Psalms 96:1-4, NIV

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised. Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

Psalms 96:1, 4, 6, NRSV

Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to him, and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures for ever, His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Psalms 100:4-5, NIV

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits.

Psalms 103:1-2, NRSV

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Psalms 103:8; 1 John 1:9, NIV

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and His compassion is over all that He has made.

Psalms 103:8; 145:9, NRSV

Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name; make known among the nations what He has done. Sing to Him, sing praise to Him, tell of His wonderful acts. Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!

Psalms 105:1-3, NIV

O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His love endures forever. Let them give thanks to the Lord for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for men.

Psalms 107:1, 8, NIV

My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make melody. Awake, my soul! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn. I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples.

Psalms 108:1-3, NRSV

Praise the Lord. I will extol the Lord with all my heart in the council of the upright, in the assembly. Great are the works of the Lord ...Holy and awesome is His name ... To Him belongs eternal praise.

Psalms 111:1-2, 9-10, NIV

Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord! Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore! From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord is to be praised!

Psalms 113:1-3, NRSV

From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised! May my prayer be set before You like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

Psalms 113:3; 141:2, NIV

Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol Him, all peoples. For great is His love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever. Praise the Lord!

Psalms 117, NIV

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalms 118:24

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”

Psalms 122:1, NRSV

I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Psalms 121:1-2, NRSV

The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth. He fulfills the desire of all who fear Him, He also hears their cry, and saves them.

Psalms 145:18-19, NRSV

Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty firmament! Praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His surpassing greatness!

Psalms 150:1-2, NRSV

“Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord: “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.”

Isaiah 1:18, NIV

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.” O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

Isaiah 6:3; Psalms 95:6, NIV

But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40:31, NRSV

Seek the Lord while He may be found, call on Him while He is near, let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that He may have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

Isaiah 55:6-7, NRSV

For this is what the high and lofty One says — He who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.” The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, will not despise. Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift up. Come near to God and He will come near to you.

Isaiah 57:15; Psalms 51:17; James 4:10, 8, NIV

Rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Joel 2:13, NRSV

With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:6, 8, NRSV

The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him. "Surely the Lord is in this place. ... How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Habakkuk 2:20; Genesis 28:16-17, NIV

The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him. "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Habakkuk 2:20; Psalms 46:10-11, NIV

"Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30, NIV

"For where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them."

Matthew 18:20, NIV

"Let the little children come to Me, do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Mark 10:14; Matthew 18:3, NRSV

"But the hour is coming — indeed is already here — when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father seeks. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth."

John 4:23-24, Jerusalem Bible

“When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’”

John 20:19, NRSV

For God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made His light shine in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6, NIV

Celebrate God all day, every day. ... Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.

Philippians 4:4, 6-7, The Message

As you come to Him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:4-5, NIV

This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all ... if we walk in the light, as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:5-7, NRSV

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:8-9, NRSV

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.

Revelation 3:20, NRSV

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.” “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or be terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Revelation 21:5-6; Deuteronomy 31:6, NIV

SPECIAL

Missions

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations will bow down before Him, for dominion belongs to the Lord, and He rules over the nations.

Psalms 22:27-28, NIV

The God who made the world. ... From one ancestor He made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, ... So that they would search for God and perhaps grope for Him and find Him — though indeed He is not far from each one of us.

Acts 17:24, 26-27, NRSV

Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Proclaim His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise.

1 Chronicles 16:23-25, NIV

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20, NIV

Christmas

“I am bringing good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Messiah, the Lord.”

Luke 2:10-11, NRSV

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom He favors!”

Luke 2:13-14, NRSV

“Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

Luke 2:15, NRSV

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Isaiah 60:1, 3, NIV

Palm Sunday

Crowds went ahead and crowds followed, all of them calling out, “Hosanna to David’s son!” “Blessed is He who comes in God’s name!” “Hosanna in highest heaven!”

Matthew 21:9, The Message

Lift up your heads, O gates; lift them up, ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is He, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty — He is the King of glory!

Psalms 24:9-10, NIV

Easter

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory.”

1 Corinthians 15:20; Revelation 19:6-7, NIV

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade — kept in heaven for you.

Psalms 136:1; 1 Peter 1:3-4, NIV

National

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He chose for His heritage!

Proverbs 14:34; Psalms 33:12

Thanksgiving

O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever! Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wonderful works to humankind. For He satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry He fills with good things.

Psalms 107:1, 8-9, NRSV

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Psalms 100:1-2, 4-5, NIV

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us make a loud noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song. For the Lord is the great God, and great King above all gods.

Psalms 95:1-3, NIV

May the peoples praise, O God; may all the peoples praise. Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear Him.

Psalms 67:5-7, NIV

INVOCATIONS

The invocation, as the word indicates, is a prayer which implores God to visit His people with grace to enable them to worship Him. It is a concise petition offered at the beginning of worship in recognition of our inability to approach God unless He provides both the way and the means.

The invocation should be confined to two or three sentences referring specifically to the act of worship. Avoid the redundancy of making the invocation either a preview or extension of the pastoral prayer.

SAMPLE INVOCATIONS

General

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love Thee and worthily magnify Thy holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

— Gregorian Sacramentary, 7th Century

O Lord our God, who are always more ready to bestow Thy good gifts upon us than we are to seek them, and art willing to give more than we desire or deserve: help us to seek that we may truly find, so to ask that we may joyfully receive, so to knock that the door of Thy mercy may be opened unto us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

— Book of Common Order of St. Giles' Cathedral

O God, author of eternal light, lead us in our worshipping this day; that our lips may praise Thee, our lives may bless Thee, our meditations may glorify Thee, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

— Sarum Breviary, 11th Century

Almighty God, grant us the forgiveness of all our sins that we, being full of grace, virtue and good works, may become thy kingdom. May we with heart, soul, mind and strength, inwardly and outwardly, submit to Thy commands and do Thy will. Amen.

— Martin Luther

We humble ourselves, O Lord of heaven and earth, before Thy glorious majesty. We acknowledge Thy eternal power, wisdom, goodness and truth, and desire to render unto Thee thanks for all the benefits which Thou pourest upon us. But, above all, for Thine inestimable love in the redemption of us by our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

— John Wesley

Do something mighty in us today, Lord. We grow complacent and reticent. We are prone to become overly familiar with holy things, leaving behind awe and reverence and the majesty due thy Name. Hide great hopes in our souls, stir mighty visions in our minds, fan noble desires in our hearts; that more perfectly we may worship Thee, more committedly we may serve Thee, and more receptively we may be filled by Thee.

Do something mighty in us today, Lord. Do Thou it for Thy Name's sake. Amen.

— E. Lee Phillips

Dear God and Lord, Your existence stretches from the beginning to the end of eternity. You are the Source of all that is; or ever will be. And it is to You whom we come, in this hour of worship, for You alone are worthy of our adoration and praise.

Please, give us ears to hear Your truth and open minds to understand. Give us eyes to catch Your vision for our lives and willing hearts (and yes, willing feet) to follow, as You lead. We pray all this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

We come to worship You, Lord, You who are the great God and Creator who launched the worlds of the universe into existence and skillfully created every living thing. Yet You are the deeply personal, loving God who offers us salvation; a chance to begin a new life through Jesus Christ.

We praise and honor You and ask Your blessing on this hour. May it be infused with Your presence, and our lives renewed by Your Spirit. Amen.

O Father, our eternal Light, lead us in our worship this day. May our lips truly praise You, our lives faithfully bless You, and our meditations greatly glorify You. Through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Great God — Our God; the creator of all that is; we give You praise: for who You are; for Jesus and his saving death; for love so freely given; for life, Your life that dwells within.

We give ourselves in worship. May our spirits encounter Your Spirit. May we be renewed and empowered for Your kingdom's work in this world. This we pray through Jesus name, Amen.

Eternal God, our Fortress, our strength, our help in trouble ... we bow before You. We confess that we come from an array of distracting circumstances, making it hard for us to truly worship.

Some of us come with fear, others with guilt. Many of us are filled up with ourselves and our things leaving little room left for You.

So, God, we ask You to replace our fear with trust, release our guilt with forgiveness, and help us to surrender anything that takes Your place in our hearts. Help us to freely worship You. May praise and honor rise from overflowing hearts and lips, because we have met You in a new way this hour. This we pray in the strong name of Jesus our Lord and King. Amen.

Advent

Eternal God, who has prepared from the beginning the minds and hearts of people for the coming of Your Son, and whose Spirit always works to illumine our darkened lives with the light of the gospel: Prepare now our minds and hearts, we pray, that Christ may dwell in us, and ever rule our thoughts and affections as the King of love, and the very Prince of Peace. Grant this, we pray, for His sake. Amen.

Almighty God, source of all things, we remember with joy and awe that the world is Your creation, and that life is Your gift. Lift up our thoughts from the smallness of our own works to the greatness, the majesty, and the wonder of Yours, and teach us so to behold Your glory that we may grow into Your likeness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Most merciful God, who so loved the world as to give Your only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life: Grant to us, we humbly pray, the precious gift of faith, that we may know that the Son of God is come, and may have hearts ready to receive Him. Grant us, through Him, the power to overcome the world and gain a home in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hosanna! Alleluia! Praise to God! Words of adoration come naturally and easy, Lord, when we begin to capture the wonder of Your love. We welcome You to this hour of worship. May this gathering with You be a time of strengthening for those who are weak; a time of renewing for those who are exhausted and dismayed; a time of confession for those who are arrogant and self-sufficient. For each one, may this be a time for encountering anew the Creator of the universe, the Savior of the world, the babe of Christmas ... In whose name we pray, the name of Jesus. Amen.

Palm Sunday

Gracious and Eternal God, as today we remember the entry of Your Son Jesus into the city of Jerusalem, may Your presence triumph in our hearts — as we worship You this hour — we want YOUR touch, where YOU see our need; and unlike the fickleness of the ancients who so easily praised, then so quickly turned their backs in the panic of the crucifixion, may our praise be ever faithful and our lives continually molded by the glory of Your resurrected Son. For it's in His name — Jesus our Savior, that we pray. Amen

Easter

Hallelujah! What a Savior, what a Friend! Saving, helping, keeping, loving — Father, In Jesus Your love is expressed so largely that we cannot get our minds around it. At the same time, He makes Your love so personal, we cannot help but respond. So we come to You in worship.

We have come to give You praise and glory, to learn from Your Word, and to grow from our shared experiences in relationship with You.

Energize each part of our worship this hour with Your Spirit. May it be a gift to You and a time of renewal and growth in us. For we pray in the name of Jesus, the greatest messenger of love. Amen.

Graduation

Heavenly Father, we celebrate this joyous occasion together in Your presence. Blend our minds and hearts into a fountain of thanksgiving to You for bringing us to this pinnacle of our lives.

We pray today for family and friends who have stood with these graduates during the struggles and joys of growth and are proud of their sons and daughters at this special hour. Thank You for their unwillingness to give up when giving up would have been easy. Thank You for their support which has cheered and encouraged young lives to finish the task at hand. May Your gracious presence, strengthen each family member and friend today.

We pray for our graduates who are the focus of our festivities. Let this day not be seen as the end of life's pursuits. Instead may it truly be a commencement, a beginning, a new day for each man and woman.

Teach them to dream Your holy dreams. Cause their hope to keep them striving toward completion. And may each success be hallowed by Your love, because they come to trust You for all things in this life.

Father, we welcome Your presence with us. We pray in the strong name of Jesus, Amen.

THE OFFERING

The offering is a supreme act of praise and thanksgiving. It should never be viewed as a perfunctory interlude for raising money. Offerings may be received in a variety of ways, but the event is always a high moment of participation as worshipers present a portion of their negotiable selves to God in recognition of His ownership of all things.

At this moment all the activities of a secular workweek come in contact with a Holy God who gives strength for honest labor.

Because of the sacredness and importance of the offering, it deserves to be introduced in the morning worship by a portion of Scripture, either before or after the ushers receive the offering.

Sample Offertory Sentences

On the first day of every week, each one is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper.

1 Corinthians 16:2

Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.

Psalms 4:5

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.

Matthew 6:33

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

What shall I render to the Lord for all His bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord, I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people.

Psalms 116:12-14

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see Your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is Yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all.

1 Chronicles 29:11, NIV

Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce.

Proverbs 3:9

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High.

Psalms 50:14

Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

1 Corinthians 4:2

“Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house; and thereby put Me to the test says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.”

Malachi 3:10

Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts!

Psalms 96:6-8

He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.

Luke 16:10

Take heed what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you.

Mark 4:24

For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?

Matthew 16:26

Now as you excel in everything — in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us — see that you excel in this gracious work [of giving] also.

2 Corinthians 8:7

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Luke 16:13

Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

Luke 12:15

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

Mark 16:15-16

Sample Offertory Prayers

O Lord our God, send down upon us Your Holy Spirit, we pray, to cleanse our hearts, to hallow our gifts, and to perfect the offering of ourselves to You; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Accept, O Lord, these offerings Your people make to You, and grant that the work to which they are devoted may prosper under Your guidance, to the glory of Your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O God, most merciful and gracious, of whose bounty we have all received: Accept this offering of Your people. Remember those who have brought it, and those for whom it is given, and so follow it with Your blessing that it may promote peace and salvation among all people, and so advance the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Almighty God, whose loving hand has given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor You with our substance, and remembering the account which we must one day give, be faithful stewards of Your bounty; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O God, who need not be enriched with any gifts that we bring, yet who loves the cheerful giver: Receive these our offerings which we present before You, and with them ourselves, our souls and our bodies, as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to You; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord Jesus, who for our sake became poor, that by Your poverty we might become rich: grant to Your people so to give of their substance as to acknowledge that they belong wholly to You; for Your own sake. Amen.

Heavenly Father, giver of all good things, who hast taught us that it is more blessed to give than to receive: We dedicate these our offerings to the service of Your Church, humbly praying that all our gifts and energies may be consecrated to the extension of Your kingdom on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All that we have is from You, heavenly Father, for You are the Creator and preserver of all peoples and all things; accept these gifts we now bring; and help us to make the whole of life an offering. We would seal this our worship in a renewed consecration of ourselves and our coming days to Your service; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BENEDICTIONS AND CLOSING PRAYERS

Worship services are usually concluded by either a benediction or a closing prayer. Benedictions are statements of blessing usually given with eyes open and facing the congregation. They present a unique opportunity for the worship leader to send the worshipers into the world with a final good word from the Lord.

Sample Benedictions

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20-21

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. Amen.

Adapted from Philippians 4:7, by Lloyd H. Knox

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

2 Corinthians 13:14

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

1 Corinthians 1:3

The Lord bless you and keep you: the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

Numbers 6:24-26

Go in peace; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

— *Lloyd H. Knox*

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you henceforth and forever. Amen.

— *Lloyd H. Knox*

May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Amen.

Romans 15:13

Unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you forever. Amen.

— *Lloyd H. Knox*

Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and ever.

Jude 24, KJV

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.

2 Corinthians 13:14, KJV

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 1:17, KJV

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Ephesians 3:20, KJV

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. Amen.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

THE LOVE FEAST

The love feast is rich in tradition, symbolism, and Christian community. It is a service in which portions of bread, the element of a simple meal, are distributed to those present and shared with each other as members of one family united by love.

The love feast has its roots in the Agape meal of the early church. Luke records of the early Christians, "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people" (Acts 2:46-47, NIV).

The symbolic breaking of bread carries profound meaning from the ancient rituals of the Old Testament to the present fellowship of believers. The Passover bread symbolizes to this day the power of God to deliver His people from bondage. The broken and shared bread of the Last Supper represents the willing sacrifice of Christ that we might not die.

Reconciliation of the most noble sort is represented in the breaking of bread. The broken bread offered by Jesus to the disciples, including Judas, in the Upper Room was a final act of forgiving love on the part of the Master. When Jesus fed the multitude with five broken loaves and two fish He demonstrated His caring love for all people in need. This simple yet miraculous act opened the compassionate heart of Jesus to a hungry multitude. Hence the breaking of bread in many different ways and places becomes a significant part of the miracle-producing fellowship experienced in the early church.

It is both a celebration of the forgiving love of Christ at Calvary and a participation in that love in the fellowship of reconciled, joy-filled believers.

The love feast practiced in the Methodist tradition was borrowed from the Moravians for reasons given by Wesley himself:

In order to increase in them [persons in bands] a grateful sense of all God's mercies, I desired that one evening in a quarter all men in band, on a second all the women, would meet, and on a third both men and women together, that we might together "eat bread," as the ancient Christians did, "with gladness and singleness of heart." At these love-feasts (so we termed them, retaining the name as well as the thing, which was in use from the beginning) our food is only a little plain cake and water; but we seldom return from them without being fed not only with the "meat which perisheth," but with "that which endureth to everlasting life."

In larger Methodist societies the love feast was held every quarter on a Sunday afternoon or following the Sunday evening

service. Smaller societies observed it only once a year. Methodist historian Dr. Frank Baker attributed the decline and virtual disappearance of the Love Feast to the fact that it was a product and instrument of revivalism.

Although the observance of the love feast has declined in Free Methodism in recent years, where it has been re-introduced it provides the church an opportunity to maintain “singleness of heart” through forgiving love which overcomes petty differences or misunderstandings.

Love Feast and Breaking of Bread

(An Order of Service)

(Designed to fulfill Par. A/379, in the *Book of Discipline*, “The Love Feast.”)

Opening Sentences

Dear friends, let us love one another; for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another God lives in us and His love is made complete in us (1 John 4:7, 10-12, NIV).

Hymn “The Bond of Love”

“Our God Is Love, and All His Saints”

Silent Meditation

(Allow time for personal introspection and inquiry.)

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalms 139:23-24 NIV).

Am I willing to know myself and accept responsibility for what I am and for what I do, or do I blame others?

Am I honest, or do I profess principles in public that I do not practice in private?

Am I more severe in my judgment of others than I am in judgment of myself?

Am I making demands upon others which I do not make of myself?

Am I listening to others so I may understand them, or do I think only of my own thoughts when others speak?

Am I gracious and courteous toward all my family, my associates, and the strangers whom I meet?

Am I forgiving toward all who have wronged me or spoken unkindly, remembering that God forgives even more through Christ Jesus my Lord?

Am I doing all in my power to keep peace and unity within the fellowship of Christian believers?

Am I ready to ask forgiveness of any I have wronged, humbling myself that Jesus Christ may be exalted in the congregation?

Am I willing to be known by others and to love my Christian brothers and sisters when I know them?

Am I ready to speak with others, "Not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts" (1 Thessalonians 2:4)?

Prayer

(The leader may offer prayer or give opportunity for extemporaneous prayer by others.)

(Bread may be distributed at this time, before the hymn, with instructions for sharing. Following the singing of the hymn, let the people move out to mingle with all others, to take from each other the proffered bread, and to speak to one another in love and appreciation quietly and sincerely.)

Hymn "We Are One in the Spirit,"

(When the time of sharing ends, let ushers gather the leftovers from the worshipers. Let the people stand to sing. They may form a circle and clasp hands if convenient and appropriate.)

Hymn "Blest Be the Tie That Binds,"

(The service may include testimonies or conclude with Holy Communion.)

Benediction

May the Eternal God whose name is Lord give His Spirit, and may the Holy Spirit pour into your heart God's love, through Jesus Christ who said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35).

Order of service contributed by Bishop Emeritus Paul N. Ellis

THE USE OF THE ALTAR

For thousands of years the altar has been a favored meeting place between God and His people. In some traditions, it has been known as the “communion rail” where the fellowship of Eden could be partially recaptured. The pastor has the treasured responsibility to make the altar a welcome place to which the people come freely and often to “find grace to help in time of need.”

The altar as we know it in the Free Methodist Church symbolizes, in part, the “mourner’s bench” of camp meeting revivalism in America’s frontier days. It serves the practical need of a place for prayer, confession, and communion with God in the presence of the congregation. Symbolically, it still represents a place of sacrifice as the penitent seeker presents himself to God as a living offering and experiences the forgiveness and acceptance of the Savior.

The altar can be used in a variety of ways in addition to the place where persons with specific spiritual needs come to seek the Lord:

1. It may be used for small group prayer meetings such as a men’s early Sunday morning or a noon-hour meeting for prayer and fasting.
2. Members of the congregation may be invited to pray at the altar during the pastoral prayer.
3. Candidates for membership are brought to the altar as a symbol of their dedication to Christ and the church.
4. The altar is often used as a place of confession and communion during the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.
5. The congregation may be invited to commitment in prayer around the altar as a conclusion to the sermon.
6. The altar is an appropriate place for a healing service, particularly The Service of Prayer for the Healing of Human Hurts (see p. 73).

Churches are encouraged to include an altar in the structural planning of the place of worship.

MUSIC AND SONG LEADING

Martin Luther once declared the importance of music when he said, "Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to people that they should proclaim the Word of God through music."

Music is God's glorious gift as a vehicle of true worship. Therefore, each worship experience should include quality singing and instrumentation appropriate to the particular congregation and service style. The words should keep a balance between God-focus (hymns and scripture songs) and a person-focus (gospel songs and choruses).

The pastor is responsible for the cultivation, oversight and use of sacred music.

Qualified persons whose character and life reveal the scriptural principles and support the standards of the Free Methodist Church shall be selected to lead the singing in public worship and, where instrumental music is in use, to play the instrument(s).

The pastor is responsible to provide for the cultivation of sacred music and to guard against complexity and formality in singing. Singing is a part of divine worship in which all persons present should unite. Congregational music shall not be subordinated to special music. Hymns fitting to the occasion should be chosen, and seldom should more than four or five stanzas of one hymn be used ...

... The purpose of music in divine service is to inspire and to sustain worship. Vocal and instrumental music used in the service shall seek to contribute to reverence and exalted worship and not the display of talent.

Par. A/378, Book of Discipline

The singing of the hymns by the congregation is a means of grace and an act of divine worship. Singing is never a warm-up, a time-filler, or a trick to change position. It is an integral part of worship and fellowship in the Spirit.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Prepare your own spirit for leadership in worship by taking time to pray before each service, asking God to anoint you with His Spirit as a member of the worship team.

2. Request the preacher's sermon subject in order to select appropriate hymns and/or songs.

3. Select the music before the service. Write down your plans for each number. For example, indicate which stanzas will be sung.

4. Give the accompanist(s) a copy of the order of worship with full instructions on music to be used, including which stanzas will be sung.

5. When using choruses with an overhead projector make certain that:

- a. The projector operator is prepared with the overheads in the order of use;
- b. The operator understands how to position the transparencies; and
- c. The projection results are clear enough to be seen by all the worshippers. Whenever possible project the music with the words to assist newcomers in learning the choruses. This will also encourage singing in harmony.
- d. Christian Copyright License, Inc. (CCLI) permission is secured. (This is required whenever words for songs are printed or projected for the congregation.)

6. The economy of words is always in order in the leadership of worship, and this applies to those who contribute in any way to the music of the service. A song leader announces a hymn with no more than one or two carefully thought out sentences. If the congregation is singing well, they need not be interrupted between stanzas with comments or exhortations.

7. Avoid giving a lesson in hymnology in the morning worship service. This is occasionally appropriate at a designated time for hymn appreciation or learning new hymns and songs.

8. Never banter the congregation into singing louder or faster or with a wider smile. This diminishes the spirit of worship by calling attention to performance. Concentration on the words and music under good direction and accompaniment will yield the fruit of edification, joy, and harmonious enthusiasm. The mechanics of song leading should always be kept in the background.

9. It is inappropriate to thank the congregation for their good singing. They aren't singing for you, the song leader. All are singing in praise to God in the joy of His great salvation. He is the one to be thanked!

10. If you will be leading singing, ask a professional musician for help with conducting simple time signatures. Maintain a good tempo, neither too fast nor too slow. Practice in front of a mirror.

If you direct with one hand, direct the rhythm of the words for the congregation. If are able to use both hands separately, you may conduct the singing with one hand and the beat for the instruments with the other.

It is not necessary to sing louder than the congregation in order to lead with your voice.

11. Instrumentalists are members of the leadership team. However, they should generally accompany the singing, except for the rare situation where it is important for them to lead. Instrumentalists must be sensitive to keep a balance of harmony and volume between instruments and voices. Balance carefully the naturally loud instruments such as brass and drums.

USHERING

Next to the public worship leaders, the ushers have more influence on the quality of the worship service than anyone else present. They influence the service by their sense of reverence, their skill in ushering, their warmth with visitors, their ability to cope with emergencies, and their all-around conduct.

General Guidelines

1. Arrive at least fifteen minutes before the service is scheduled; earlier if capacity attendance is expected.
2. Attend services regularly in order to understand the flow of the worship service and lead by example.
3. Dress as you would for any public event of significance in your community. The way you dress should contribute to a sense of the presence of God.
4. Be an exemplary worshiper. Avoid either stiff formality or undue casualness. Gum chewing, lounging against walls, or preoccupied socializing with one another are not in good taste.
5. Consider yourself on duty from the time you take your assignments until after the service. During all this time, be friendly and helpful — providing assistance when appropriate, answering inquiries about telephone and rest room, locating persons in the congregation who are needed for emergencies, etc. As far as possible learn the names of regular worshipers in order to greet them personally.
6. Be responsive at all times to the leadership of whoever is in charge.
7. Value your partnership with the pastor and worship team. Be alert to needs which only you can help solve (ventilation, lights, parishioner becoming ill in service, etc.).

Methods of Seating

Seating methods should be demonstrated by the pastor or head usher at a training session. You will be responsible to learn and follow these instructions.

Methods for Taking Offerings

If you are responsible for collecting the offering, the procedure should be demonstrated by the head usher. For example, when you move to the first pews to receive the offering, you should be attentive to the orderly passing of the offering plates through each pew, moving unobtrusively down the aisle. Your attention should focus, not on the people and their giving, but upon the orderly and natural way in which the offering is received.

Absence

If you must be absent, notify the head usher and, if asked to do so, arrange for a substitute as far in advance as possible.

SPECIAL SERVICES

Sample Organization of a New Free Methodist Fellowship

Invocation

Hymn of Praise

Responsive Reading

Prayer

Ministry in Music

Sermon

(An appropriate subject is the New Testament view of the church as the body of Christ.)

Ritual for Organization as a Fellowship

(The superintendent, or other designated pastor, calls those who have been members of a Free Methodist Fellowship or those who wish to form a new fellowship to the front.)

Superintendent or Designee: Having faith in Christ and His Holy Bible, and having received instruction in the beliefs and organization of the Free Methodist Church of North America, is it your desire to form a fellowship as the first step toward becoming a Free Methodist Church?

People: It is by the grace of God.

Superintendent or Designee: What shall be the name of this fellowship?

People *(or the pastor or a representative of the congregation):*

This will be known as the _____ (name of fellowship) Free Methodist Fellowship of _____ (city and state).

Superintendent or Designee: I now declare that the _____ (name of fellowship) Free Methodist Fellowship of _____ (city and state) is duly organized and invite each of you to join by answering the questions contained in the ritual of membership.

(The superintendent or designee will then proceed with the ritual according to Par. A/353 of the Book of Discipline. After concluding with the questions, the superintendent or designee may offer an extemporaneous prayer.)

Superintendent or Designee: (Optional)

(Those being received into membership shall kneel, and the minister, laying hands upon each of them in turn, shall say:)

I receive you into membership in the Free Methodist Church. May the Lord confirm you in faith and fellowship as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Those being received shall rise, and the minister, addressing the candidates, shall say:)

We rejoice to recognize you as members of the Free Methodist Church and charter members of the (name of fellowship) Free Methodist fellowship. We bid you welcome to all its privileges. In token of our brotherly love we give you the right hand of fellowship and pray that you may be numbered with His people here and with His saints in glory everlasting. May the church be a blessing to you, and you to the church.

Friends, I commend you, each to the other, to love and care for one another, and to do all in your power to strengthen each other's faith, confirm each other in hope, and perfect each other in love.

Hymn

Benediction

Sample Organization of a New Free Methodist Society

Invocation

Hymn of Praise

Responsive Reading

Prayer

Ministry in Music

Sermon

(An appropriate subject is the New Testament view of the church as the body of Christ.)

Ritual for Organization as a Society

(The superintendent, or other designated pastor, calls those who have been members of a Free Methodist Fellowship or those who wish to form a new society to the front.)

Superintendent or Designee: Having read the Constitution of the Free Methodist Church of North America contained in the *Book of Discipline* and having familiarized yourselves with the policies and practices of the church contained therein, do you now adopt this *Book of Discipline* as your rule and authority in organizing a new Free Methodist Church?

People: With thankful hearts to God, we do.

Superintendent or Designee: What will the society now formed be named?

People *(or the pastor or a representative of the congregation):* This society will be known as the _____ (name of society) Free Methodist Church of _____ (city and state).

Superintendent or Designee: I now declare that the _____ (name of society) Free Methodist Church of _____ (city and state) is duly organized and invite each of you to join by answering the questions contained in the ritual of membership.

(The superintendent or designee will then proceed with the ritual according to Par. A/353 of the Book of Discipline. After concluding with the questions, the superintendent or designee may offer an extemporaneous prayer.)

Superintendent or Designee: (Optional)

(Those being received into membership shall kneel, and the minister, laying hands upon each of them in turn, shall say:)

I receive you into membership in the Free Methodist Church. May the Lord confirm you in faith and fellowship as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Those being received shall rise, and the minister, addressing the candidates, shall say:)

We rejoice to recognize you as members of the Free Methodist Church and charter members of the (name of society) Free Methodist Society. We bid you welcome to all its privileges. In token of our brotherly love we give you the right hand of fellowship and pray that you may be numbered with His people here and with His saints in glory everlasting. May the church be a blessing to you, and you to the church.

Friends, I commend you, each to the other, to love and care for one another, and to do all in your power to strengthen each other's faith, confirm each other in hope, and perfect each other in love.

Hymn

Benediction

ADMISSION INTO MEMBERSHIP

1. The conditions for membership in the Free Methodist Church are:
 - a. awakening to God, a desire to seek God (Par. A/301);
 - b. assent to participate in the maturing opportunities offered by the church, such as classes, Bible studies and small groups (Par. A/307);
 - c. evidence of genuine conversion (Par. A/302);
 - d. receiving the catechism of baptism and the sacrament of baptism, or, if baptized in infancy, giving public assent to the baptismal covenant (Par. A/124);
 - e. completing the approved course of instruction for prospective members, which clearly teaches the history, theological distinctive and mission of the Free Methodist Church;
 - f. commitment to the membership covenant (Pars. A/154-160), and the Christian Conduct section of the *Book of Discipline* (Pars. A/315-342);
 - g. interview by the pastor and/or membership care committee, who will verify the person's conversion, baptism and willingness to commit to a holy Christian life (Pars. A/306-307);
 - h. approval by the church's official board upon recommendation of the membership care committee (Par. A/404.4, Sec.4); and
 - i. giving affirmative answers to the questions for membership before a public meeting of the church (Par. A/353.1).
2. The numbering of the above steps for membership is the normative order. The sequence of some steps may vary according to individual need. The purpose is to allow new believers or transfers to:
 - a. identify life issues and receive assistance;
 - b. identify theological/doctrinal questions and attain answers; and
 - c. learn the mission of the church and express commitment to it.

A local church or annual conference may designate steps 1:a-c as preparatory membership. The ritual for reception into preparatory membership (Par. A/360) may be used.

(Those who are to be received into membership shall be called forward [by name, if desired] and the pastor, addressing the people, shall say:)

Into this holy fellowship the persons before you, who have received the sacrament of baptism, who have learned the nature of these privileges and duties, who have been instructed in the teachings and mission of the Free Methodist Church, and who have been approved by the official board, come to be welcomed into full membership. We now propose, in the fear of God, to question them as to their faith and purpose, that you may know that they are ready to be admitted into this church.

(Ritual other than questions and answers is optional.)

(Then, addressing those seeking admission, the pastor shall say:)

Beloved in the Lord, you have come to be received into membership in the Free Methodist Church. We rejoice that you have decided to undertake the privileges and duties of membership in this church. Before you are admitted, you shall here publicly renew your vows, confess your faith, and declare your purpose, by answering the following questions:

*(**See page 56 for questions for those with limited learning skills.)*

1. Have you now the assurance of the Holy Spirit that your sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ?
2. Do you now experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit with His cleansing of heart and empowerment for service, or, if not, will you seek His fullness through study, counsel, and prayer?
3. Do you intend to serve God by the full use of the abilities He has given you?
4. Do you believe the Holy Scriptures to be the revealed will of God containing all things necessary to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ?
5. Do you accept the Articles of Religion, the Membership Covenant, and the Organization and Government of the Free Methodist Church, and will you endeavor to live in harmony with them?
6. Will you, in fellowship with your pastor and fellow members, avail yourself of the means of grace, such as, public worship of God, the ministry of the Word, the Lord's Supper, family and private prayer, and the searching of the Scriptures?
7. Will you practice the principles of Christian stewardship, giving freely of your time, talents, and possessions to Christ and His church?

(Here the pastor shall introduce each candidate to the congregation, and shall continue as follows:)

You, my fellow-members of this congregation, have heard the vows of these who have completed the requirements for membership in the Free Methodist Church. Let us now welcome them into our fellowship.

(The method of welcoming shall be left to the discretion of the pastor.)

(Here the pastor may offer an extemporaneous prayer.)

This is optional:

(Then those to be received into membership shall kneel, and the pastor laying hands upon each of them in turn, shall say:)

_____, I receive you into the fellowship of the Free Methodist Church. May the Lord confirm you in the faith and fellowship of the true disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Those being received shall rise, and the pastor addressing the candidates, shall say:)

We rejoice to recognize you as members of the Free Methodist Church and bid you welcome to all its privileges; and in token of our love we give you the right hand of fellowship and pray that you may be numbered with His people here and with His saints in glory everlasting. May the church be a blessing to you, and may you be a blessing to the church.

(Then shall the pastor say to the congregation:)

Friends in Christ, I commend to your love and care these persons whom we this day recognize as members of our church. Do all in your power to strengthen their faith, confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

Book of Discipline, Par. A/353

****** The following questions may be used in receiving those with limited learning skills as members of the Free Methodist Church when the other requirements of Par. A/353 have been met.

1. Do you know that Jesus loves you?
2. Do you love Jesus?
3. Will you do what God wants you to do?
4. Do you understand that the Bible is God's book that tells us about Himself?
5. Do you love this church?
6. Will you come to church and take part in the activities that are going on during our services?
7. Will you pray at home and share in the reading of the Bible?
8. Will you do what you can to help our church tell others about Jesus?

ADMISSION INTO PREPARATORY MEMBERSHIP

— Optional —

(For use in those annual conferences or local churches who choose to follow the provisions of Par. A/360. Ritual other than questions and answers is optional.)

(Those who are to be received as preparatory members shall be called forward by name, the pastor, addressing the people, shall say:)

Dearly beloved, that none may be admitted into the Free Methodist Church without instruction, we receive persons who seek fellowship with us into preparatory membership, during which they may be properly instructed, and also give proof, both to themselves and to the church, of the sincerity and depth of their convictions and of the strength and purpose of their desire to lead a new life.

(Then addressing the persons seeking admission as preparatory members, the pastor shall say:)

Beloved in the Lord, you have by the grace of God made your decision to follow Christ and to serve Him. Your confidence in so doing is to be based not on any notion of fitness or worthiness in yourselves, but on the gracious promise of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ who loved us and gave himself for us.

That the church may know your purpose, will you please answer the following questions:

1. Do you have the assurance that God has forgiven your sins through faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer: I have.

2. Are you willing to receive membership instruction as offered by our church?

Answer: I am.

3. Have you received Christian baptism?

Answer: Yes or no.

If not, will you receive this sacrament at a duly appointed time?

Answer: Yes.

4. You have been won to Christ. Will you endeavor to win others to Christ and the church?

Answer: I will.

(Then shall the pastor say:)

On behalf of the Free Methodist Church and in the hope that you will go forward to complete membership therein, I extend to you a cordial welcome.

(Then shall the pastor offer extemporaneous prayer.)

ADMISSION INTO YOUTH MEMBERSHIP

(Those who are to be received as youth members shall be called forward [by name, if desired] and the pastor shall say:)

Beloved, our Lord Jesus, by His Holy Word, has expressly given to everyone who believes in Him a place in His kingdom and church. Before you are admitted into the church, it becomes my duty to inquire of you as to your purpose of mind and heart.

1. Do you believe that Jesus Christ has forgiven your sins and is now your Savior?

Answer: I do.

2. Have you received Christian baptism*, or if not, are you willing to be baptized?

Answer: Yes.

3. Have you attended, or if not, will you attend your pastor's class of instruction on living the Christian life and serving God through your church?

Answer: Yes.

4. As a faithful member, will you pray for your church, attend regularly, give to your church, and help wherever you can?

Answer: Yes.

5. Will you try to show others by the way you live what it means to be a Christian, and will you do your best to bring them to Christ?

Answer: I will.

Optional

(Here the pastor may offer an extemporaneous prayer. Then those to be received as youth members shall kneel, and the minister, laying hands upon each of them in turn, shall say:)

I receive you into the fellowship of the Free Methodist Church as a youth member. May God confirm you in the faith and fellowship of all true disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Book of Discipline, Par. A/363

*Those received into youth membership who have been baptized in infancy are required to affirm the baptismal vows. See Paragraph A/903, *Book of Discipline*.

A SERVICE OF PRAYER FOR THE HEALING OF HUMAN HURTS

Prepare the congregation in advance.

1. Preach on the healing miracles of Jesus.
2. Recruit prayer support from the intercessory groups in the church.
3. Explain the purpose and nature of the service of prayer for the healing of human hurts.
4. Assure the people that every request will be kept in strict confidence.

Prepare yourself and several others who will assist you in praying at the altar.

1. Remember that the moments with each seeker at the altar are for prayer only. If counseling is needed, suggest that it be arranged at another time.
2. Prepare your hearts through fasting and prayer the previous week and during a time of prayer and meditation immediately preceding the service.
3. Prepare the order of service to include appropriate music, a brief meditation (perhaps on a healing miracle of Jesus), and a testimony of healing from one of your people.

Prepare the people to come to the service ready to write on their prayer cards a specific concern of their own or a burden they carry for another. Encourage them to be honest in describing in a few words the deepest concerns of their own lives — physical, emotional, or spiritual.

After hymns and scripture readings* which magnify the love of God and the healing ministry of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, ask the people to come forward and kneel opposite you and the others who assist you, presenting their cards with explicit needs indicated. Spend a few moments in faith-filled prayer with them. Allow them to remain in quiet meditation until they wish to return to their places.

As music plays quietly in the background, people will come to share with you burdens and hurts of which you had no knowledge.

It may be appropriate to ask for personal testimonies following if time allows.

Printed prayer cards and attractive folders with appropriate Scripture and readings are available at modest cost from Light and Life Communications. You may wish to print your own using the following suggestion:

PRAYER CARD:

Name

Personal needs

My prayer burden for another

FOLDER:

Jesus said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Each of us carries a concern for a friend. Many of us have burdens of our own which are too heavy to bear. There are broken places in either body, mind, or spirit which only Christ can heal.

Our risen Lord stands among His people in a service such as this, welcoming you to come with your burden, with your hurt, and let Him touch you with His healing love.

As you come to share your need with God and one of the intercessors at the altar, your Christian friends will be praying for you.

We invite each of you to become a part of a caring, praying congregation. During this hour let the creative work of the Holy Spirit bring to you a new realization that Christ is carrying the heaviest part of your burden for someone else.

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

— *Jesus*

(**Front cover:** A Service of Prayer for the Healing of Human Hurts
Scripture reference, Matthew 12:15, "And many followed Him, and He healed them all. ...")

***Suggested readings:** Isaiah 53:4-6; Psalms 46:1-3, 10-11; Luke 4:16-21; John 5:1-8; Romans 8:26-27; Hebrews 7:23-28 and 10:19-23.

INSTALLATION OF CHURCH STAFF

(This service is to be used for the installation of full-time staff members of local churches, preferably in a service of worship, following the preaching of the Word. The officiating minister [senior pastor or superintendent] shall invite the new staff member(s) to meet before the altar and say:)

Dear friends in Christ, (name) _____ have/has been appointed to minister in the life of this congregation as (position) _____. We gather now to install them/him/her and to pray fervently for their/his/her effectiveness in this ministry. Let us hear the word of the gospel.

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16, NIV).

Let us hear the word of the epistles.

“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.

Honor one another above yourselves” (Romans 12:3-10, NIV).

Jesus called James and John from the care of their fishing nets, Matthew from the customs office, Priscilla and Aquila from their livelihood in Rome. All these, and a host besides, have been chosen by God to serve His people and enlarge His kingdom on earth.

Moreover, it has pleased God to grant His servants with gifts suited to their task. He granted to Bezaleel the skill to fashion gold and silver; upon Joshua He bestowed the gift of leadership; upon Isaiah He poured the spirit of prophecy. In the days of the apostles, He empowered His people to teach, heal, administer, and evangelize, all to the glory of His name.

We therefore approach this hour with the confidence that He has appointed (names) _____ to carry out a ministry of _____ and that He will provide all grace needed for the work.

To the staff member:

Will you accept this ministry with dependence upon the grace of God for its fulfillment?

Will you nurture the gifts you have been given and the skills you have acquired and use them for the advancement of our Lord's Kingdom within and beyond our congregation?

To the congregation:

Will you open your lives to the ministry of _____

and support them/him/her through your prayers and cooperation?

Let us pray.

Almighty God, You have built the church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, making Jesus Christ Himself the chief cornerstone. Grant therefore that through the power of Your Holy Spirit Your church everywhere may bear living witness to Your calling and election and may labor fervently to do Your will on earth.

To this end grant that this congregation may be given divine energy to know and fulfill Your purpose, worshipping You with gladness and sharing Your saving goodness with all mankind. Grant especially that these, Your servants, inducted this day into special ministry among Your people, may receive divine anointing so that all they attempt for You may be done effectually and in the Spirit of Christ; through whom we pray with confidence and thanksgiving. Amen.

(The secretary or other elected officer will then present to the inductee a scroll list of the congregational members and attendees and say:)

This Love/Care list represents people in this community whom God has given this church to care for, love, evangelize, and enfold in membership, so that those whom He has created will be saved and His work enlarged in this place. Take this as a symbol of your partnering with this congregation, to carry out the ministry to which God has called us together.

(The officiating minister shall then invite the inductees to speak to the congregation briefly about their personal experiences with Christ, the providence which has led to this induction, and their vision for the work.)

(The minister or an officer appointed shall respond, offering words of welcome, pledges of loyalty on behalf of the church, and promises of prayer and cooperation.)

Closing hymn and Benediction

INSTALLATION OF OFFICIAL BOARD MEMBERS

(This installation may be held during a Sunday morning service or other appropriate service just prior to the time when the newly elected officers shall assume their duties. The congregation may join in singing a hymn, such as: "A Charge To Keep I Have.")

(The pastor may read a Scripture lesson such as Acts 2:41-44 and 6:1-8. Depending upon the number of the officers involved, he/she may wish to read concerning their duties from the Book of Discipline. At the proper time, the minister shall call the newly elected officers before the congregation, and shall address them, saying:)

Dear friends in Christ, it is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles that as the early church grew and the number of disciples multiplied, and the duties of the church diversified and increased, the church called its members together and chose men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, to assist in the administering of the affairs of the church. The officers chosen were set before the apostles, who laid hands on them and prayed, setting them apart in the presence of the church to the duties of their honorable office.

In like manner this congregation, having first sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has chosen you to serve with persons in similar offices and with the pastor before whom you have now come for public consecration.

Therefore, we, the pastor and the people of this congregation call upon you to join in this pledge of faithfulness to Christ and His church.

(The pastor shall direct the elected officers to recite the Officers' Pledge:)

The Officers' Pledge

Officers: Trusting in Jesus Christ, the great Head of the church, I humbly promise that I will be faithful to the extent of my ability in all known duties and responsibilities devolving upon me as an officer of this church.

I will endeavor to be regular in attendance, cheerful in service, wholehearted in giving, open-minded in planning, patient in trials, persistent in difficulties, and Christ-like in fidelity to His service.

By precept and example, I will seek the promotion of Christian fellowship among all our members and the spreading of the message of full salvation at home and abroad.

Pastor: Do you cheerfully and willingly accept the obligations of this pledge?

Officers: I do.

(Then the pastor shall address the congregation, asking them to stand, and say:)

We, the pastor and officers of this church, call upon you, its members and friends, to join in this pledge of loyalty to those called of God and elected by the church as its leaders.

The Church's Pledge

Congregation: Having chosen these officers to lead us in the administration of our church, we, its members and friends, do now pledge our cooperation to fulfill the assignments of witness and service we may be given. We acknowledge our duty and declare our determination to pray for all our leaders and to share with them in the responsibility of spreading the good news, thus hastening the coming of Christ.

Pastor: Do you cheerfully and willingly accept the obligations of this pledge?

Congregation: We do.

(The officers shall then kneel at the altar while the pastor and people offer prayer on their behalf.)

INSTALLATION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION STAFF

Prelude

Congregational Hymn

Pastoral Prayer

Special Music

Installation

(Each new staff member and teacher comes forward with unlighted candle. The presiding pastor, addressing the staff shall say:)

You have been elected to a responsible task. Yours is the God-appointed opportunity to lead others to higher and nobler attainments in their Christian lives. Some of you will present Christ for the first time to children and others. Your influence will help shape their decisions.

Your business is to love as God loves, to do little things as though they were great things, because of the humility and majesty of the Christ you represent.

Whatever gifts are yours, whatever talents are bestowed upon you, whatever abilities you have amount to nothing without love. Take up your work with cheerfulness. Your task may at times be tedious and demanding, but perform it with joy because you love Christ.

As you serve this church and this community, you serve God. Whatever reverence, dedication, planning, and diligent work you expend in performing your duty you render service to God as well as to people.

Response (in unison):

We trust in God for the wisdom and strength to accept this charge, to fulfill its requirements, and to walk in obedience as we endeavor to lead others in His way.

(Following the response, the presiding pastor lights each candle of the staff members who have responded. As their candles are lighted, the staff members kneel at the altar.)

Prayer of Dedication

(Staff members arise, and face the congregation while the presiding pastor closes with the benediction:)

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face to shine upon you,
And be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up the light of His countenance
Upon you and give you peace. Amen.

GROUND BREAKING

Invocation

Hymn

Scripture Reading (1 Chronicles 29:14-18)

Prayer

Introduction of Guests

Exhortation or Homily by the Pastor

Response by Chairman of the Board of Trustees

Ground breaking

A number of people (such as charter or senior members, former and present pastors, church leaders, building committee, community leaders) by prearrangement may now participate by turning a shovel full of sod.

Hymn

Benediction: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11, NIV).

(A ground breaking is newsworthy. The news media should receive an announcement and be invited to cover the event. If they choose not to attend, a news release should be submitted, telling of the event.)

CORNERSTONE LAYING

(At the time and place of the laying of a cornerstone, the pastor will call the people to worship by announcing a hymn, preferably one well known to the people, unless hymnals are provided.)

Hymn

Invocation

Assist us, O Lord, in all our doings, with Your most gracious favor, and further us with Your continued help that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in You, we may glorify Your holy name, and finally, by Your mercy, obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(The pastor may continue in extemporaneous prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer.)

Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 3:9-16 or 1 Chronicles 29:10-17, Psalm 127:1 and 90:17.

(The pastor, while standing by the stone, shall announce the articles which are to be placed in it. These may include a Bible, a hymnal, the Book of Discipline, current issues of Free Methodist periodicals, a document listing the name of the church with names of the pastor(s), trustees, building committee, members, and any other such items as are deemed appropriate. The stone shall then be laid by the pastor or the pastor's appointee, [usually with the assistance of a stone mason], and the pastor, placing a hand on the stone will say:)

We lay this cornerstone of a house to be built and set apart from all worldly uses for divine worship in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Then may follow:)

A Homily

Offering

The Doxology

Benediction or Closing Prayer

MORTGAGE BURNING

Prelude

Invocation

Hymn of Praise

Reading of the Scriptures

Welcome

Special Music

Prayer *(to be read in unison)*

Almighty God, we give humble and hearty thanks for all Your goodness and loving-kindness to us. We thank You for this occasion in which we acknowledge Your kindness in supplying our temporal needs. Help us to show forth Your praise, not only with our lips, but in daily living by giving ourselves to the work of Christ through this church, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Introductions

Special Music

Address

(A sermon on the subject of Christian stewardship is appropriate)

Presentation of the Mortgage to the Presiding Pastor:

Trustees Litany

Pastor: Praise God for His mighty acts.

Congregation: Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Pastor and Congregation: Being graciously prospered by God in lifting the burden of debt from this church, we now, with joy in our hearts and praise to God on our lips, are about to transform this mortgage, the symbol of our completed task, into the incense of prayer and thanksgiving.

Pastor: With love for our church and in reverent memory of all who by their faithful services and sacrifices through the years have given to us our spiritual heritage and physical property;

Congregation: We now proceed to burn this mortgage.

Pastor: With grateful appreciation for the generosity and faithfulness of members and friends, for the earnest labors and the untiring services and prayers of the officers of this church;

Congregation: We gratefully share in this experience.

Pastor: With a prayer that God shall continue to guide us with

wisdom, bless us with the spirit of unity, and inspire us to use our heritage, our property, and our every potential to lead persons to Christ and into the full blessing of the Spirit-filled life;

Congregation: We acknowledge that apart from Him we can do nothing.

Pastor: Rededicating ourselves to the work and support of this church, and to the extension through this church of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, throughout our community, our nation, and our world;

Congregation: We now burn this mortgage to the honor and praise of God.

(Here the pastor lights the candle and ignites the facsimile of the mortgage or passes the lighted candle to a chosen person who ignites the facsimile. As this takes place, the pastor shall say:)

Pastor: In recognition of God's sovereign will for us as His people, we do now burn this mortgage in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The Singing of the Doxology

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Acknowledgments

Hymn

Benediction

Postlude

(Be sure to handle the papers in a fireproof container to avoid anxiety or danger.)

RITUALS FOR DEDICATIONS

THE DEDICATION OF A CHURCH

(The leaders in the service, the bishop or superintendent, the pastor, the board of trustees, the board of stewards, and any others so designated, shall proceed up the center aisle, moving to their assigned places, reading responsively the following Psalm, the bishop [supt.] leading and the pastor and trustees reading together each alternate verse:)

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein;
for He has founded it upon the seas,
and established it upon the rivers.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in His holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false,
and does not swear deceitfully.

He will receive blessing from the Lord,
and vindication from the God of his salvation.
Such is the generation of those who seek Him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is the King of glory?
The Lord, strong and mighty.
The Lord, mighty in battle!

Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
He is the King of Glory!

Psalm 24

(The leaders reaching their places, and being seated, the pastor shall move to the pulpit and say:)

This building, underwritten by the consecrated gifts of the congregation of the Free Methodist Church, erected by the faithful labors of His servants (name of builders or company), and brought this day to completion through the providence of Almighty God, we have now assembled to dedicate to the glory of His name. Let us call upon God for His divine favor.

Invocation

Hymn of Worship

(The chair of the trustees shall approach the bishop [supt.] and say:)

On behalf of the board of trustees of the Free Methodist Church, who are acting for the whole congregation, I present to you this building, to be dedicated to the glory of Almighty God.

(The chairman, returning to his or her place, the bishop [supt.] addressing the congregation shall say:)

Dear friends, forasmuch as devout and holy leaders, moved either by the command of God, or by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, and acting in agreement with their own sense of the natural propriety of things, have erected houses for the public worship of God, and separated them from all unhallowed and worldly uses, in order to fill men's minds with greater reverence for His gracious majesty, and affect their hearts with more devotion and humility in His service, which pious works have been approved of and graciously accepted by our Heavenly Father; let us not doubt but that He will also approve our godly purpose of setting apart this place for religious worship, for the enrichment of the lives of His people, and for the enlargement of His kingdom in this community. Let us devoutly plead His blessing on our undertaking.

(The bishop [supt.] calling the congregation to stand for prayer, shall say:)

Eternal God, mighty in power, and incomprehensible in majesty, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, much less the walls of temples made with hands, and who yet has been graciously pleased to promise Your special presence wherever two or three of Your servants assemble in Your name to offer up their praises and supplications to You; condescend, O Lord, to be present with us who are gathered here with humility and readiness of heart, to consecrate this place to the honor of Your great name, separating it from all unholy uses, and dedicating it to Your service, for reading Your Holy Word, for proclaiming Your everlasting gospel, for teaching Your people in the ways of righteousness, for celebrating Your holy sacraments, for offering to Your glorious majesty the sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving, for blessing Your people in Your name, and for all other sacred events: accept, O Lord, this service at our hands, and bless it with success that brings glory to You and the furtherance of our happiness both temporal and spiritual, through Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Savior. Amen.

(After this the bishop [supt.] and congregation shall say, alternately:)

Bishop [Supt.]: Regard, O Lord, the supplications of Your servants; and grant that by Your Holy Word which shall be read and preached in this place, and by Your Holy Spirit grafting it in the heart,

the hearers may both perceive and know what things they ought to do and may have power and strength to fulfill them. Amen.

Congregation: Grant, O Lord! that those who shall offer up to You hearty repentance for their sins and shall exercise faith toward Your Son Jesus Christ may receive such a measure of Your Holy Spirit that they may grow in grace until their life's end. Amen.

Bishop [Supt.]: Grant, O Lord, that whosoever in this house shall be received by baptism into the congregation of Christ's flock may find nourishment from Your Word and fellowship among Your people and may continue as Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto life's end. Amen.

Congregation: Grant, O Lord, that whosoever shall receive here the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ may come to that holy ordinance with faith, love, and true repentance, and being filled with Your grace and heavenly benediction, may, to their great comfort, be assured of remission of their sins, and all other benefits of His passion. Amen.

Bishop [Supt.]: Grant, O Lord, that whosoever shall be joined together in this place in the holy estate of matrimony may faithfully perform and keep the vows made between them and may remain in holy love together unto their life's end. Amen.

Bishop [Supt.] and Congregation: Grant, we pray, blessed Lord, that whosoever shall draw near to You in this place, to give thanks for the benefits which they have received at Your hands, to set forth Your most worthy praise, to confess their sins unto You and to ask such things as are requisite and necessary, as well for the body and soul, may do it with such steadiness of faith, and with such seriousness, affection and devotion of mind, that You may accept their service, and condescend to give whatever in Your wisdom You determine is best for them. All this we ask for Jesus Christ's sake, our most blessed Lord and Savior. Amen.

(Then the bishop [supt.] and congregation, being seated, the sentence of dedication shall be read by the pastor and people and then laid on the communion table.)

We, the pastor and people of the _____ Free Methodist Church, do now dedicate this house together with all its facilities to the praise and service of Almighty God. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Then the bishop [supt.] shall say:)

Blessed be Your name, O Lord, that it has pleased You to put it into the hearts of Your servants to devote this house to Your honor and

worship. Grant that all who shall enjoy the benefit of this sacred work may show forth their thankfulness by making right use of it, to the glory of Your blessed name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Instrumental interlude or special vocal music

(The pastor shall then make introductions and announcements and read correspondence pertaining to this achievement of God's people.) Charge by the bishop [supt.] (this may be a sermon or a written or extempore exhortation, depending on what has been agreed upon and is suitable to the occasion).

Hymn of Worship

(Then the bishop [supt.] shall say:)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Adapted from a historic ceremony for use in
Free Methodist churches
by Bishop Emeritus Donald N. Bastian

THE DEDICATION OF A CHURCH

(An alternate ritual)

Prelude

Pastor: The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for He founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.

Congregation: Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Savior. Such is the generation of those who seek Your face, O God of Jacob.

Pastor: Lift up your hands, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors that the King of Glory may come in. Who is the king of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

Congregation: Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is He, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty, He is the King of glory.

Scripture

Ephesians 3:20-21; Psalm 115:1-13

Choral number or other ministry in music

*Hymn

"The Church's One Foundation"

*Prayer

Welcome by the Pastor

Greetings from Special Guests

Announcements

Children's Choir (optional)

*Hymn

"God of Our Fathers"

Offering

Sermon

*Hymn

"How Firm a Foundation"

Five Scriptural Values Leader and Congregation

Leader: Obedience to God's Word is the highest form of worship.

Congregation: Grant, O Lord, that we may take to heart all the words You have solemnly declared to us this day so that we may command our children to obey carefully all the words of Your law. Your words are not just idle words for us, they are our life. By them we will live long in the community we have come to possess.

In view of God's mercies, we offer our bodies as living sacrifices,

holy and pleasing to God, which is our spiritual worship. We will endeavor not to be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but will be transformed by the renewing of our mind. Then we will be able to test and approve what God's will is; His good, pleasing and perfect will.

The entrance of Your words gives light. We will let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, hiding it in our hearts so that we will not sin against You.

*(Deuteronomy 33:45-47; Romans 12:1-2;
Psalms 119:11; 130; Colossians 3:16)*

Leader: The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

Congregation: Grant, O Lord, that we may find joy in this house of prayer, for Your church is to be called a house of prayer for all nationalities who worship with us.

Teach us to follow the examples of the Apostles who "all joined together constantly in prayer along with other believers." When pressures and threats come upon the church, may we again learn from the apostles to "raise our voices together in prayer to God." And after we have prayed, may we all be filled with the Holy Spirit and speak the word of God boldly.

Thank You, Lord, that the prayer of a righteous people is powerful and effective.

(Isaiah 56:7; Acts 1:14; 4:24, 31; James 5:16)

Leader: Every believer is a minister, gifted by God for the benefit of the kingdom.

Congregation: Grant, O Lord, that we will use whatever gifts we have received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. In Christ we who are many form one body and each of us belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. May we develop and use these gifts to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

(1 Peter 4:10; Romans 12:5-6; Ephesians 4:12-13)

Leader: God is glorified through the unity of the body of Christ.

Congregation: Grant, O Lord, that all people will know that we are Your disciples and that the world may believe that the Father sent the Son because we love one another.

Now that we have purified ourselves by obeying the truth so that we have sincere love for our brother, help us, O Lord, to love one

another deeply, from the heart. Yes, love one another deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.

Strengthen us to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bonds of peace, for Your word declares that it is good and pleasant when brothers live together in unity. For there the Lord bestows His blessing, even life evermore.

*(John 13:3-5; 17:21; 1 Peter 1:22; 4:8;
Ephesians 4:3; Psalms 133:1, 3)*

Leader: Lost people are precious to God and to us.

Congregation: Grant, O Lord, that we may care about the souls of men and women with the compassion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost. There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. God is patient with all of us, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

O God, that our eyes might be fountains of tears that we would weep day and night for those who do not know You. May we have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in our hearts for those in this community and peoples of other lands who have never heard of You, or having heard, have rejected Your offer of salvation. Give us large hearts that always care about the salvation of people.

*(Luke 19:10; 14:10; John 3:14-17;
2 Peter 3:9; Jeremiah 9:1; Romans 9:2)*

Leader and Congregation: As we offer these our church values and prayer requests, we, the pastor and people of the _____ Free Methodist Church, dedicate this church together, with all its facilities, to the praise and service of Almighty God. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Prayer of Dedication

*Hymn "To God Be the Glory"

*Benediction Pastor

*Congregation standing

(Written by Pastor Harold Bishop and members of the Free Methodist Church of Lawrence, Kansas. Used with permission with minor adaptation.)

THE DEDICATION OF A PARSONAGE

(At the time appointed for the dedication service, an appropriate hymn may be sung by the congregation or by a soloist or choir. Suitable numbers include: "Happy the Home When God Is There" and "Bless This House." Then the pastor or other appointed minister shall give an extemporaneous prayer. Then the pastor or other appointed minister shall give a Scripture reading, such as 1 Corinthians 9:7-10, 13-14. Then the superintendent or a designee shall address the congregation, saying:)

The scriptures clearly teach that as Aaron was divinely appointed to the priesthood, even so today men and women are called to the ministry for the purpose of preaching the Word and otherwise giving aid and comfort to the spiritually needy. In the same divine program it is also "commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14, NIV). Providing a house for the pastor is a recognition of this high office and its value to the church. It is a wise provision contributing to the temporal support of the pastor (and family).

This house about to be dedicated as a parsonage has been made possible by the generous gifts of those who support the ministry of this church.

(Then the trustees, or their chairman, shall come and stand before the officiating pastor, and the chairman of the board of trustees shall address him, saying:)

On behalf of the trustees and the members of this congregation, I present this house to be dedicated to God as a home for the pastor and her/his family.

(Then the superintendent may give an appropriate discourse gratefully commending the people for providing this house and charging the pastor to live here in the fear of God and as a faithful servant of the people. Then a prayer of dedication shall be offered, such as the following:)

Leader: Most gracious Lord, we acknowledge that we are not worthy to offer to You anything belonging to us. Yet we ask You to accept the dedication of this home to Your service.

People: Thank you, Lord, for hearing our prayer.

Leader: Grant that whoever lives in this house shall be so dedicated to Your service as "an instrument for noble purposes made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work," that their ministry shall be a heavenly benediction to all they meet.

People: Thank you, Lord, for hearing our prayer.

Leader: Grant, O Lord, that the ministering servants of Yours who enter this home shall be made aware of Your presence. As they

depart let them be strengthened to walk in Your holy commandments. Grant that all who minister to the material comforts and necessities of Your servants in this home shall by You be richly rewarded.

People: Thank you, Lord, for hearing our prayer.

Leader: Grant, O Lord, that all who come to this home for spiritual counsel and comfort shall be made to know what things they ought to do and may have the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit to do the same.

People: Thank you, Lord, for hearing our prayer.

Leader: Grant, O Lord, that whoever shall live together in the holy estate of matrimony in this home may faithfully perform and keep the vow and covenant between them made, and may they remain in perfect love together unto the end of their lives.

People: Thank you, Lord, for hearing our prayer.

Leader: Grant, O Lord, we pray, that at the family altar of this home, when prayer with thanksgiving and supplication shall be offered, that they may receive from Your hand such things as are necessary. As Your servants search Your Word, may that divine illumination for life and duty be given as in Your infinite wisdom You shall see to be most expedient for them.

People: Thank you, Lord, for hearing our prayer.

Leader and People: All this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our most blessed Lord and Savior. Amen.

Leader: I now declare this house duly set apart as the residence for the pastor of the _____ Free Methodist Church.

(Then the superintendent or other designated person shall pronounce the benediction:)

The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

THE DEDICATION OF A FELLOWSHIP HALL

(At the time appointed for the dedication service, an appropriate hymn may be sung by the congregation or by a soloist or choir. Then the pastor or designee shall give an extemporaneous prayer. Scripture lessons such as Luke 2:36-40, 52; Acts 2:37-42, may be read after which the superintendent or other appointed leader shall address the assembly, saying:)

In the early years of Jesus' life He "... increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." The New Testament church "... continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Providing a building for education and fellowship is an acknowledgement of the church's responsibility to minister to the total person.

(Then a representative of the trustees of the church shall come and stand before the appointed leader and shall say:)

On behalf of the trustees and the members of this church, I present this building to be dedicated to God as a place for education and fellowship to the glory of God and for the extension of His kingdom.

(Then the leader shall say, the people standing:)

Dearly beloved, it is right and proper that buildings erected for service in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, should be set apart in consecration for their special uses. For such a dedication we are now assembled. And, since the dedication of this building is vain without the solemn consecration of those whose gifts and labors it represents, let us now give ourselves anew to the service of God: our souls, that they may be renewed after the image of Christ; our bodies, that they may be fit temples for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; and our labors and business, that they may be according to God's holy will, and that their fruit may tend to the glory of His name and the advancement of His kingdom.

(Response by the people:)

To the glory of God the Father who has called us by His grace; to the honor of His Son who loved us and gave Himself for us; to the praise of the Holy Spirit who illumines and sanctifies us; we dedicate this building.

To the holy ministry of education we dedicate this building.

We dedicate this building to the spiritual enrichment of all who shall come here in pursuit of knowledge.

We dedicate this building to the loyal service of those whose training and devotion have prepared them to lead students toward the truth.

We dedicate this building to the enrichment of the lives of those who find fellowship in this place.

We dedicate this building to the success of the ministries carried on here by any branch of the Lord's church.

We dedicate this building as we dedicate ourselves anew to that service to God.

(Then the leader shall offer a prayer of dedication, such as the following:)

Eternal God, giver of every good gift, graciously accept we pray, the dedication of this building to Your honor and glory.

Grant, O Lord, we beseech You, to take under Your protection our children. Pour into their hearts Your grace that they may be here enlightened and instructed to learn what is pleasing to You and may grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with You and with others.

Grant, O Lord, that herein we may have fellowship with You and with one another; grant that here Your people may meet in devotion to You; here may Your way be taught, Your name hallowed, and Your glory praised. Here may life be nourished and guided, Christian principles exemplified, and the bonds of fellowship in Christ be nurtured in mutual love and selfless purpose.

All this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our most blessed Lord and Savior. Amen.

(Then the pastor shall address the congregation, saying:)

I now declare this building duly set apart as the education/fellowship hall of the _____ Free Methodist Church.

Benediction:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

THE DEDICATION OF A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BUILDING

Prelude

Invocation

Hymn

Scripture Lesson — 1 Chronicles 29:10-16

Ministry in Music

Sermon or Homily

Presentation of the Keys, by the Board of Trustees

Service of Dedication

Leader: Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be unto our God forever and ever.

People: Blessed be the Lord God who does wonderful things, and blessed be His glorious name forever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory.

Leader: Having been graciously prospered by the hand of God to finish the work, which in His providence we were called upon to perform;

People: We do now with joy and gratitude, solemnly dedicate this building.

Leader: For the spiritual enrichment of children; for the nurture of youth; for the edification of the Christian home;

People: We dedicate this building.

Leader: To provide a place where persons of all ages may seek and find the truth which sets us free;

People: We dedicate this building.

Leader: For the fellowship of kindred souls who share the love made possible through Jesus Christ;

People: We dedicate this building.

Leader: To the glory of God the Father, to the honor of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to the praise of the Holy Spirit;

People: We dedicate this building.

Leader and People: We now, the people of this church surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, remembering the sacrifices of the fathers, confessing that apart from us their work cannot be made perfect, dedicate ourselves anew to the teaching of the Word of God by both precept and example. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

Dedication Offering

Offertory

Benediction

Postlude

THE DEDICATION OF THE HYMNAL FOR WORSHIP AND CELEBRATION

Hymn

“O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing”

“Praise God In His Sanctuary” Nos. 7-10 (HWC)

Leader: From the beginning of biblical history the people of God have offered praise to the Lord in song. When the children of Israel were delivered from their oppressors Moses led them in a song of triumph: “The Lord is my strength and my song,

Congregation: “And He has become my salvation;

Leader: “This is my God,

Congregation: “And I will praise him,

Leader: “My father’s God,

Congregation: “And I will exalt him” (Exodus 15:2, RSV).

Leader: It is in this spirit of reverence and gratitude that we have met to dedicate *The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration*. We now join in a litany of dedication and a prayer for guidance and understanding in the wise use of this hymnal.

Litany of Dedication

Leader: With gratitude to Almighty God for His gift of song as an expression of praise;

Congregation: We dedicate this hymnal to the service of God.

Leader: In recognition of the blessing that has come to the world through the inspired offerings of the poets and musicians represented here;

Congregation: We dedicate this hymnal to the service of God.

Leader: With the earnest expectation that our communion with Christ and with one another will be enriched by teaching and admonishing our fellow Christians in all wisdom, as we sing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs;

Congregation: We dedicate this hymnal to the service of God.

Leader: Let us reverently join in a prayer of dedication.

Prayer of Dedication

Hymn

Benediction

THE DEDICATION OF AN ORGAN, PIANO OR OTHER INSTRUMENTS

Hymn

Call to Worship

Leader: O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

People: We praise You, O God, we acknowledge You to be the Lord.

Leader: It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Your name, O Most High,

People: To show forth Your loving-kindness every morning and Your faithfulness every night.

Leader: O Lord, open now our lips.

People: And our mouths shall show forth Your praise.

Leader: Take up the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ.

People: Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the psaltery and harp. Praise Him with stringed instruments and organs.

Invocation (in unison)

Almighty God, our Father, in praise of whose greatness the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy, let Your glory rest upon this service of dedication. Grant us the needed grace to worship You acceptably. Teach us how to love You more perfectly and to more worthily magnify Your holy name. In the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Offering

Ministry in Music

Sermon

Dedication of the Instrument(s)

Leader and People: In thoughtful recognition of those who have gone before us and have provided this house of worship, we now come to dedicate this organ/piano, etc. To the glory of God through worship in music, we dedicate this (these) instrument(s).

Leader: To the glory of God, the Father Almighty, that we may the more worthily worship Him and magnify His holy name;

People: We dedicate this (these) instrument(s).

Leader: To the glory of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, at whose coming to earth the multitude of the heavenly host sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men;"

People: We dedicate this (these) instrument(s).

Leader: To the Holy Spirit, in whose fullness the discords of life are lost in the harmony of the love of God;

People: We dedicate this (these) instrument(s).

Leader: To the church of Jesus Christ and its mission in the world; the comforting of the sorrowful, the strengthening of the weak, the cheering of the weary, the curing of the sinsick souls, the swelling of the chorus of praise;

People: We dedicate this (these) instrument(s).

Prayer of Dedication

Almighty and eternal God, accept, we pray, the sacrifice and service of Your people who have added to Your house this instrument of praise to assist us in the worship of Your holy name. Accept the work of our hands, the worship of our hearts, and the songs of our lips.

Make of our lives a harmony of Your grace and love until all our earthly praise finds its refrain in the chorus sung around the throne forever. Be pleased to bless and sanctify the use of this (these) instrument(s). May the music always call us to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. We pray in the worthy name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn of Praise

Concert or recital

Offering

Hymn of Praise

Benediction

Postlude

THE DEDICATION OF A MEMORIAL GIFT

(At an appropriate time in a worship service, the minister and people shall stand and recite responsively these sentences of praise from the Psalms:)

Responsive Reading

Pastor: Praise the Lord: praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in the fullness of His power.

People: Praise Him for His mighty acts: Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

Pastor: Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name: bring an offering and come into His courts.

People: O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Presentation and Dedication

(Then the pastor shall say:)

_____ will present the memorial.

(The person making the presentation shall say:)

In the memory of _____, we present this memorial gift to this church, to be dedicated to the glory and praise of God.

(The designated official shall then respond:)

We accept this gift as a sacred trust, and shall guard it reverently, in honor of the life in whose memory it is given.

(Then the pastor shall say:)

In memory of _____, we now dedicate this memorial to the glory of God, setting it apart for its intended use in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Dedicatory Prayer

(Then the pastor, or some other designated person, shall offer a prayer of dedication:)

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, without whom no words or works of ours have meaning, but who accepts the gifts of our hands as the tokens of our devotion: grant Your blessing upon us as we dedicate this gift to Your glory.

May this memorial which we now dedicate be an enduring witness before all Your people of the faithful stewardship of all our substance.

May our lives, being consecrated to Your service, be joined with Your faithful ones into that building which grows unto a holy temple in the Lord. Amen.

Hymn

Benediction (if at the close of a service)

A FREE METHODIST PERSPECTIVE ON PREACHING

The Free Methodist Church believes that the Christian church, at its best, has always given priority to preaching, whether during the apostolic era, the Reformation, or at present. It subscribes to this priority for biblical reasons.

Jesus Christ came preaching. He sent forth His apostles to preach and to heal. After His ascension, when the day of Pentecost came and the Spirit was poured out upon the waiting believers, the first act of the apostles was to preach. From then on, in synagogues, town centers, jails, and the temple, they carried out this task.

They proclaimed that in Jesus, God's kingdom had come among us and explained the meaning of His life, death, resurrection, and ascension to the Father's right hand. As the church became established and grew, the apostles set forth what the implications of the gospel should be in the everyday life of Christ's followers. Preaching and teaching were wedded in ministry.

Eighteen centuries later the Methodist revival was a revival of preaching. The throngs listened to the fervent preaching of John Wesley and his colleagues. As the movement spread, the spirit of exhortation came upon converts who had neither special training nor ordination, and they too began to speak forth the Word of God with convincing force. Those "local preachers" became a major factor in the growth of Methodism.

The Free Methodist Church is in the biblical-Methodist tradition. It believes that preaching is a foremost activity of the Christian ministry and, in a larger sense, that the whole church is God's proclaiming agent.

This conviction has several implications: The hard work of preaching must have a priority in the time and energies of the Free Methodist pastor.

When the pastor preaches with clear, biblical content under the unction of the Holy Spirit, not only will salvation come to unbelievers but spiritual maturity will result in the congregation. Furthermore, under the influence of inspired, biblical preaching, young men and women will be led to follow God's call to preach the gospel.

Jesus came preaching. Those truly called by Him will also come to their task preaching.

RITUALS

THE SERVICE OF INFANT BAPTISM

(The minister coming to the font, which is to be filled with pure water, shall say:)

Dear friends in Christ:

God, through Moses, made covenant with Israel, saying to the people, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

In the days of the New Covenant, Christ Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." And on the day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter declared, regarding the salvation given through Christ, "The promise is to you and to your children."

It is therefore our privilege to present our children to the Lord and our duty to raise them in His ways. These parents now bring *this child* to offer *him/her* in dedication and to pledge in the presence of this congregation to bring *him/her* up in the Lord's discipline and instruction.

Let us pray:

Almighty and everlasting God, who has made saving covenant with Your people and who, out of Your loving-kindness, has ordained that they should live before You in families; we thank You that it is our privilege to dedicate our children to You, in steadfast hope that they will cleave to Your covenant and live to Your glory. We entreat You for *this child* that *he/she* may be delivered from the power of sin and Satan and be set apart to You by the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray for these parents that they may be given divine aid, so that both by instruction and example they may lead *this child* in the way of everlasting life, and so all may come in unity together to Your eternal kingdom. We pray for this congregation, that we may faithfully discharge our duties to both parents and child, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Questions to parents)

1. Do you, in the presence of God and this church, solemnly dedicate *this child* to the Lord?

Answer: We/I do.

2. Do you, so far as you are able on *his/her* behalf, renounce the devil and his works, the lure of the world and the sinful desires of fallen humanity, so that in the training of *this child* you will not be led by them and so that so far as you are able, you will keep *this child* from following them?

Answer: We/I do.

3. Will you faithfully strive by word and example to lead this child to personal faith in Christ?

Answer: We/I will.

4. Do you accept the authority of the Old and New Testaments?

Answer: We/I do.

5. Out of them, will you diligently teach *this child* the commandments and promises of the Most High God, raising *him/her* in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

Answer: We/I will.

The congregation will now stand. Let us acknowledge our duty to strengthen this family with prayers and encouragement, thus aiding both parents and child to fulfill all that has here been promised.

(The pastor shall here take the child, and say:)

_____, I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us pray: O God, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, grant that *this child* may increase in wisdom and stature, growing in divine and human favor. So guide and uphold these parents that they may lead *this child* into that life of faith in Jesus Christ whose mark in this world is righteousness and in the world to come, everlasting bliss. May *he/she* be brought early to affirm in faith all that has here been pledged on *his/her* behalf, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction: "Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of His glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." (Jude 24, 25.)

(In the place of the second prayer, the pastor may offer an extemporaneous prayer which will include the petitions set forth in the printed prayer.)

THE SERVICE OF INFANT DEDICATION

Dear friends in Christ:

God, through Moses, made covenant with Israel, saying to the people, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

In the days of the New Covenant, Christ Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these," and on the day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter declared, regarding the salvation given through Christ, "The promise is to you and to your children."

It is therefore our privilege to present our children to the Lord and our duty to raise them in His ways. These parents now bring *this child* to offer *him/her* in dedication and to pledge in the presence of this congregation, to bring *him/her* up in the Lord's discipline and instruction.

Let us pray:

Almighty and everlasting God, who has made saving covenant with Your people and who, out of Your loving-kindness, has ordained that they should live before You in families; we thank You that it is our privilege to dedicate our children to You, in steadfast hope that they will cleave to Your covenant and live to Your glory. We entreat You for *this child* that *he/she* may be delivered from the power of sin and Satan and be set apart to You by the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray for these parents that they may be given divine aid, so that both by instruction and example they may lead *this child* in the way of everlasting life, and so all may come in unity together to Your eternal kingdom. We pray for this congregation, that we may faithfully discharge our duties to both parents and child, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(Questions to parents)

1. Do you, in the presence of God and this church, solemnly dedicate *this child* to the Lord?

Answer: We/I do.

2. Will you endeavor to live a life before *this child* which will give witness to your faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer: We/I will.

3. Do you accept the authority of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God?

Answer: We/I do.

4. Out of them, will you endeavor diligently to teach *this child* the commandments and promises of the Most High God, so that your child may early come to personal faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer: We/I will.

(Then shall the pastor say:)

Let us acknowledge our duty to support this family with our prayers and encouragement, thereby aiding both parents and child to fulfill all that has here been promised. The congregation will affirm this by standing.

(The pastor shall then take the child and say:)

Name this child. Even as Joseph and Mary brought Jesus in the time of His infancy to the temple to present Him to God, so now, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we present ____ in an act of dedication to God, with a prayer that at an early age in life *he/she* may experience His justifying and sanctifying grace. Amen.

(Here the pastor shall pray an extemporaneous prayer on behalf of the parents and their child.)

Book of Discipline, Par. A/901, Sec. 2

THE SERVICE OF BAPTISM OF CHILDREN UNDER TWELVE

In lieu of the questions to parents or guardians in Paragraph A/901.1, the following may be asked candidates for baptism who are under twelve years of age:

1. Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and do you desire to be baptized in His name?

Answer: I do.

2. Do you intend by this act to testify to all the world that you are a Christian and will be a loyal follower of Christ?

Answer: I do.

3. Do you believe in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?

Answer: I do.

4. Trusting God to help you, will you resist temptation always and keep from doing those things which you know to be sinful or displeasing to God?

Answer: I will.

5. Will you attend the church services and do those things you know a Christian should do?

Answer: I will.

Book of Discipline, Par. A/902

THE AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISMAL VOWS FOR YOUTH MEMBERS

Dearly beloved, in your infancy your parents presented you at the altar of the church for the Sacrament of Baptism. That service was one of both dedication and consecration. Your parents dedicated you to the Lord and took vows on your behalf. They promised to teach you from the Word of God and to train you in the way that you should go.

God in His goodness has brought you to years of responsibility, and you now desire to acknowledge before God and His church the covenant then made on your behalf, to profess your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to consecrate yourself to Him, and thereby to bind yourself anew to His service.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has said, "So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven."

Question: Do you confess your faith in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, and do you promise with the aid of the Holy Spirit to be Christ's faithful disciple to your life's end?

Answer: I do.

Question: Have you read and considered the vows taken for you in baptism, and do you affirm them with a humble and contrite heart, putting your whole trust in the mercy of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Answer: I do.

Question: Do you promise to make diligent use of the means of grace, to share faithfully in the worship and service of the church, to give of your substance as the Lord may prosper you, and to give your whole heart to the service of Christ and His kingdom throughout the world?

Answer: I do.

NOTE: Adults having been baptized in infancy should reaffirm their baptismal vows according to Paragraph A/353 of the *Book of Discipline*.

Book of Discipline, Par. A/903

THE SERVICE OF BAPTISM OF ADULTS

[Use personal names wherever possible. In the case of several candidates, use these or their(s) as applicable.]

Dear friends in Christ: our faith declares that by the sin of Adam, the offspring of Adam are corrupted in their very nature, so that from birth they are inclined to sin; and that new life and a right relationship with God are possible only through the redemptive acts of God in Christ Jesus. Believing these declarations to be true, and in obedience to the command of Christ, *(Name)* _____ has come to make public confession that *his/her* sins have been washed away, and by means of baptism with water, to give sign of that inward washing and new life in Christ which are now *his/hers* by faith. We therefore implore you to pray that through this means of grace *he/she* may be further moved to keep covenant with God and so may *he/she* ever experience the constant washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. *(Then shall the minister say:)*

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, whose covenant is firm and whose promises are always to be trusted, we call upon You for *(Name)* that *he/she*, coming to *his/her* baptism, may by this act give clear witness that *he/she* has received Your inner washing through faith in the cleansing blood of Your Son, Jesus Christ. May *he/she* ever rejoice in the forgiveness of sins, the indwelling of Your Spirit, the fellowship of the church and the assurance of resurrection to glory in the world to come. *(Then shall the people stand, and the minister shall say:)*

Christ Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age."

You, who present yourself for water baptism, have heard this congregation's prayers that God will continue His loving favor toward you and bring you to His eternal kingdom. And God, who keeps covenant, has promised by His only Son, who offered Himself up for our redemption to grant you these gracious favors. You must now promise, in the presence of this congregation, to keep covenant with Him, renouncing the life of sin, believing His Holy Word and obediently keeping His commandments.

[The following is to be used by the minister as an introduction to the candidates' affirmation of their vows.]

Let us all reaffirm our faith by proclaiming together the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ His only son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

[The alternate version of the Apostles' Creed may be used.]*

(These questions are to be asked by the minister to the candidates for baptism in the presence of the congregation.)

1. Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?
2. Do you have the assurance that your sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ?
3. Do you renounce Satan and his works?
4. Do you renounce the ungodliness of this world and all sinful desires?
5. Will you live in obedience to Christ?
6. Will you actively participate in the life and ministry of His church?
7. Do you accept the Old and New Testaments as the authority for your life?
8. Will you by this act of baptism testify to the world that you are a Christian?

(Then shall the minister take by the hand each person to be baptized, place them in a convenient place and shall baptize them by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, according to the candidate's desire, saying:)

(Name)_____, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

(Then shall the minister use the following prayer, or substitute an extemporaneous one including the same petitions:)

God, our Father, who gives to all who repent and believe the gospel the right to be called children of God, may Your grace ever be effectual in this, Your child. And may *he/she* enjoy the greater baptism

of the Holy Spirit so that all sinful inclinations may be conquered by Your power, and every Christian virtue may live and grow in *him/her*. Grant to *him/her* a place of service in the fellowship of Your church and may *his/her* witness in the world bring glory to Your holy name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Here may follow a benediction if the service is ending.)

Book of Discipline, Par. A/904

* Alternate version of Apostles' Creed *(as found in the Catechism)*

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hades; the third day He arose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THOSE WHO SERVE COMMUNION

The elder, or deacon assigned to a church, is expected to use the communion ritual printed in the *Book of Discipline*. Innovation is sometimes helpful, and special circumstances may make it necessary, but customarily our appointed ritual should be followed. Moreover, the celebrant ought not to ad lib, either because ritual itself is deemed troublesome or because he or she feels the need to modify its theology. It is of value for our people to hear these words again and again. They reflect our understanding of the meaning of Holy Communion.

The officiating pastor should prepare for serving Communion in the following way: Before the service, go over the words of the ritual again, to prepare one's own heart. Check well in advance to make sure those who are responsible for preparing the elements have made final arrangements at the communion table to avoid the distraction of last minute preparation when worshipers are arriving. All ministers who are to assist should know their duties well before the service begins, and musicians should be briefed. The celebrant should also give special attention to personal grooming.

Whenever practical, serve Holy Communion at the altar. There are occasions, of course, when innovation is valuable in giving worshipers a fresh insight into the meaning of the sacrament. Communion may be served where there is no altar or structural symbolism, where communion is both opportune and edifying. Under normal circumstances, however, when a well-known ritual is followed people come to know what to expect and can give better focus to their meditations. Furthermore, because we are a connectional church, it is good for our people who move from one church to another to feel at home by common procedures. If every celebrant follows personal preferences, without regard for our usages, we lose this important connectional feature. The content and meaning of good ritual gains impact with repetition.

If Holy Communion is being served in a Sunday service, it is wise for the order of service to be arranged so the Sacrament is not viewed as an after-thought. The pastor who attempts to add the Sacrament to a regular Sunday schedule will find that, but for exceptional occasions, people come to the communion table distracted with thoughts about the lateness of the hour.

Some pastors make the Communion service a special service in which a shorter meditation is given either before or after Communion, and the other parts of the service are shortened appropriately.

Before the officiating pastor reads the general invitation, the cloth should be removed from the elements, folded carefully, and laid aside. This small act assists the people by visual symbolism to prepare for the service.

The pastor who is celebrating Holy Communion without the assistance of others should partake first. When Aaron presided over the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, he first offered sacrifice for his own sins before offering the sacrifices for the people. If another pastor is assisting, the assistant may be served first, who then serves the officiating pastor.

The pastor who serves the bread and cup should hold the tray so that the communicants can take their own portions. The practice of putting the bread into the cupped hand of the communicant may seem too “priestly” and may symbolize unduly the dependence of the laity upon the clergy.

The words of the ritual, “The body of our Lord Jesus Christ ...” should be said quietly by the server while moving along the altar or holding the elements for communicants as they move past. This practice also deepens the meaning of the words as they are heard repeatedly. A phrase can be used for each two or three communicants: “The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for you.” The service is thus further personalized.

The pastor should instruct the ushers carefully to assist the people in coming forward. The more they are assisted, the less they have to be concerned with the mechanics of coming forward and returning to their seats. This, too, leaves them freer to concentrate on the meaning of the sacrament.

If the altar has special holders for the used cups, the worshipers will deposit them there. If not, a separate tray should be available for collecting them as the people are leaving. This is preferable to putting them back into the serving tray.

If communicants are being served individually while kneeling at the altar, each “table” may be dismissed with a word of scripture or encouragement, closing with the words: “Arise and go in peace, and may the God of peace go with you.”

Music may be played softly while the people are being served, but preferably not during the reading of the ritual.

When all have been served, the table should be restored to order, and if a cloth has been used it should be placed over the elements. The service may move to a closing hymn and benediction according to the plans of the leader.

CHILDREN AT THE LORD'S TABLE

"Should children be allowed to take Communion?"

"If so, at what age?"

These are questions often addressed to pastors by thoughtful parents.

The 1979 General Conference affirmed the following ruling by the Board of Bishops on the subject:

"We find that we may not forbid Christian parents the privilege of bringing their children with them to partake at the table of the Lord in Holy Communion.

"In practice, we exhort pastors, parents, and teachers to instruct all children under their care so that there may be a degree of understanding of the Christian sacrament consistent with the age and intellectual maturity of the child. There should be careful preparation for that time when, as an accountable believer, the individual may respond to the invitation with a more mature understanding.

"We also urge that proper care be taken that there shall be no irreverence in the administration of the sacrament when children are present or at any other time."

The following questions will assist parents in deciding when their children are ready to partake of the Lord's Supper:

Does my child want to participate?

Does my child have a personal relationship with Jesus?

Does my child understand the basic meaning of the Lord's Supper; that the bread is a symbol of Jesus' broken body, that the juice represents Jesus' blood shed for us, that together they remind us that He died for our sins and that Communion is a special time set aside to remember what Jesus has done for us and to thank Him?

If the answers to these questions are "yes," parents should feel free to bring their children to the Lord's table.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

*(The use of individual communion cups is recommended, wherever practical. Sections marked with an * may be used when an abbreviated service is desired.)*

***The Invitation**

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with your neighbors, and who intend to lead a new life following the commandments of God, and walking in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort; and, humbly kneeling, make your honest confession to Almighty God.

The General Confession

(The minister may pray:)

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all men, we confess that we have sinned, and we are deeply grieved as we remember the wickedness of our past lives. We have sinned against You, Your holiness, and Your love, and we deserve only Your indignation and anger.

We sincerely repent, and we are genuinely sorry for all wrongdoing and every failure to do the things we should. Our hearts are grieved, and we acknowledge that we are hopeless without Your grace.

Have mercy upon us.

Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father, for the sake of Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, who died for us.

Forgive us.

Cleanse us.

Give us strength to serve and please You in newness of life and to honor and praise Your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Then may the minister say, "Let us continue our confession as we pray together the prayer Jesus taught His disciples.")

*** The Lord's Prayer (In unison)**

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

(The minister may continue the prayer.)

*** The Affirmation of Faith**

O Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness to all who turn to You with hearty repentance and true faith, have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from our sins, make us strong and faithful in all goodness, and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Then may the minister say, "Let us pray for inner cleansing.")

*** The Collect (To be prayed in unison)**

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You, and worthily magnify Your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Sanctus

It is always right and proper, and our moral duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God.

Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven, we honor and adore Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying,

(In unison)

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts!

Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

Glory be to thee, O Lord, most high. Amen.

(Then may be sung or recited)

The Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father

And to the Son

And to the Holy Ghost:

As it was in the beginning,

Is now, and ever shall be,

World without end. Amen. Amen.

(Then may the minister pray:)

The Prayer for Spiritual Communion

We do not come to this Your table, O merciful Lord, with self-confidence and pride, trusting in our own righteousness, but we trust in Your great and many mercies. We are not worthy to gather the crumbs from under Your table. But You, O Lord, are unchanging in Your mercy, and Your nature is love; grant us, therefore, God of mercy, God of grace, so to eat at this Your table that we may receive in spirit and in truth the body of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, and the merits of His shed blood, so that we may live and grow in His likeness, and, being washed and cleansed through His most precious blood, we may evermore live in Him and He in us. Amen.

*** The Prayer of Consecration of the Elements**

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who gave in love Your only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who by His sacrifice, offered once for all, did provide a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, we come now to Your table in obedience to Your Son, Jesus Christ, who in His holy gospel commanded us to continue a perpetual memory of His precious death until He comes again. Hear us, O merciful Father, we humbly ask, and grant that we, receiving this bread and this cup, as He commanded and in the memory of His passion and death, may partake of His most blessed body and blood.

In the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread,

(Here the minister may take the bread in hand.)

and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

In like manner, after supper He took the cup,

(Here the minister may lay hands upon the cups.)

and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of this, all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." Amen.

(Then may the minister first receive the communion, both the bread and the cup, and then give of the same to other ministers who may be present to assist in the service. After that the minister shall give to the people the communion, both the bread and the cup. When the bread is delivered, the minister may say:)

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving.

(When serving the cup the minister may say:)

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

(If the consecrated bread or cup are used up before all have been served, the minister should consecrate more by repeating the prayer of consecration. When all have communed the minister shall return to the Lord's table and place upon it the consecrated elements which remain, covering the same with a white linen cloth. The minister may then offer extemporaneous prayer, or speak briefly of the significance of the service, and conclude with a blessing.)

The Benediction

May the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be yours now and forever. Amen.

Book of Discipline, Par. A/911

ALTERNATE RITUAL FOR THE SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

THE INVITATION

The Pastor

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with your neighbors, and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking henceforth in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament for your comfort; and humbly bowing make your honest confession to Almighty God.

THE GENERAL CONFESSION

The Pastor

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Maker of all things, Judge of all people, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness and deliverance to all who turn to you with hearty repentance and true faith, we confess that we have sinned against you and are hopeless without Your grace. Have mercy upon us, O merciful Father, have mercy upon us; pardon and deliver us from all our sins:

from blindness of heart and lack of love;

from the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil;

from false doctrine and neglect of Your Word;

from anxiety and lack of trust.

O God, our Savior, keep us this day without sin.

Give us strength to serve and please You in newness of life, and to honor and praise your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE PETITION

The Pastor

Almighty God, You have so faithfully watched over us, and so graciously helped us; now hear our petitions:

for good health and sound minds,

for strength to earn our bread, for rest from worry and labor,

for safety in travel, for protection from enemies,

for Christian homes, for a just and strong nation.

Out of Your compassion give us those things which are good and proper for our souls, and protect us by Your might in all our tribulations. Grant us in this world the peace that is from above, and bring us to everlasting life in the world to come, through Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray saying:

The People

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen.

THE INTERCESSION

The Pastor

Almighty God, who created the world from nothing, and who sustains it by Your powerful word, support and protect us that we may serve You as intercessors in Your world; and to that end hear our prayers for those in need:

for the sick, the infirm and the dying;
for widows and orphans, the poor and oppressed;
for the lonely, discouraged, bereaved and heartbroken;
for those in bondage to sin, unmindful of God, without knowledge of the gospel of salvation.

We pray too for all Your servants who work honorably in the cause of our Lord, Jesus Christ:

for homemakers and wage earners,
for teachers and students,
for doctors and nurses and others who serve the sick,
for laborers and executives,
for farmers and city dwellers,
for the aged and the young,
for those who govern and those who are ruled,
to each of these and to all others for whom we should pray, give wisdom, strength and the power to endure, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Here may be sung a communion hymn.]

THE DIALOGUE

The Pastor The Lord be with you.

The People And also with you.

The Pastor Lift up your hearts.

The People We lift them up to the Lord.

The Pastor Let us give thanks to the Lord.

The People It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

THANKSGIVING

The Pastor

We give You thanks, O Lord God, for all Your goodness at all times and in all places. You have shielded, rescued, helped, and guided us all our days and brought us to this hour, letting us once again worship You and seek Your help.

Blessed are You, Lord God, Ruler of all creation; for by Your goodness we have this bread from the soil and this fruit from the vine.

PRAISE

The Pastor

It is always right and proper that we should give You thanks and praise, O Lord God, for You alone reign. You judge the world in righteousness and rule over all the nations. Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven we honor and adore Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

The People

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts!

Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.

Glory be to You, O Lord, Most High. Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Pastor

Almighty God, You created us to enjoy Your fellowship; and even when we transgressed Your command, You did not forsake us, but chastened us as a merciful Father;

You called Abraham from the land of his fathers, and freed the children of Israel from bondage and slavery; you gave Your law and sent Your prophets to guide them in Your ways;

At the right time You gave the world Your only Son, who by His birth of a virgin, and through His temptations and ministry, His suffering and death, His resurrection and ascension, opened to us the way to heaven;

You sent Your Holy Spirit, the counselor, who through the apostles and the church, called us to salvation; you adopted us and daily give us aid in the journey of faith by the same Spirit. Our hearts are full, O God, and in thanksgiving to you we cry, Abba, Father.

In confidence that You will bring us to our full inheritance, and give us our place at the heavenly table with Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, we offer thanksgiving, joining our voices with all the church to confess:

The People

Christ has died,
Christ has risen,
Christ will come again.

GLORY TO GOD**The People**

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

PRAYER OF APPROACH**The Pastor**

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, send the power of Your Holy Spirit upon us, that we may experience anew the suffering, death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. May Your Spirit help us to know, in the breaking of this bread and the drinking of this cup, the presence of Christ who gave His body and blood for all. And may Your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in service to all the world. Amen.

WORDS OF CONSECRATION

The Pastor, laying a hand upon the bread:

In the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Take, eat, this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

The Pastor, laying a hand upon the cup:

In like manner, after supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of this, all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

WORDS OF DISTRIBUTION**The Pastor**

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with thanksgiving.

The Pastor

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

BENEDICTION

The Pastor

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you forever. Amen.

THE LORD'S SUPPER: A BIBLICAL LITURGY

THE INVITATION

Pastor:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Hebrews 10:19-24

THE CALL TO LOVE

Unison:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Mark 12:29c-30; Matthew 22:38-39;

Mark 12:31c; Matthew 22:40

THE GOOD NEWS FROM JESUS

Pastor:

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," He said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Mark 1:14-15

THE BLEST ACTS AND ATTITUDES

Unison:

Now when He saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and He began to teach them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when people insult you,
persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you
because of me.
Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven,
for in the same way they persecuted the prophets
who were before you.”

Matthew 5:1-12

THE RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITY

Pastor:

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:13-16

THE DISCIPLES' PRAYER

Unison:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your
heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not
forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 6:9-15

THE COMMUNION FAITH

Pastor:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all He appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

THE SUPPER INSTITUTED

Pastor:

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

After taking the cup, He gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Luke 22:14-20

THE SLAIN LAMB

Unison:

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

And when He had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song:

“You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.
You have made them to be a kingdom of priests
to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth.”

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!”

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!”

The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Revelation 5:6-14

Pastor:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3:20

or:

Pastor:

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy — to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Jude 24-25

(On occasion the Disciples Prayer may be sung and/or hymns may be interspersed between the readings.)

Compiled by Lloyd H. Knox

(All scriptural quotations are from the NIV.)

INTRODUCTION TO THE MARRIAGE RITUAL

The Ceremony

Tastes vary in regard to the marriage ceremony. There are, however, practices which have received general acceptance and may be considered proper.

The bride stands to the left of the groom during the ceremony; the bridesmaids stand to the left of the bride; the best man and the groomsmen to the right of the groom. If the father of the bride gives the bride away, he should stand to the right of the bride and a step behind the bridal party. After giving the bride away, he takes his seat beside the bride's mother.

The order of the bridal procession is not the sole responsibility of the pastor, but he or she is frequently consulted. Such a request should be promptly met. A wedding consultant is often available.

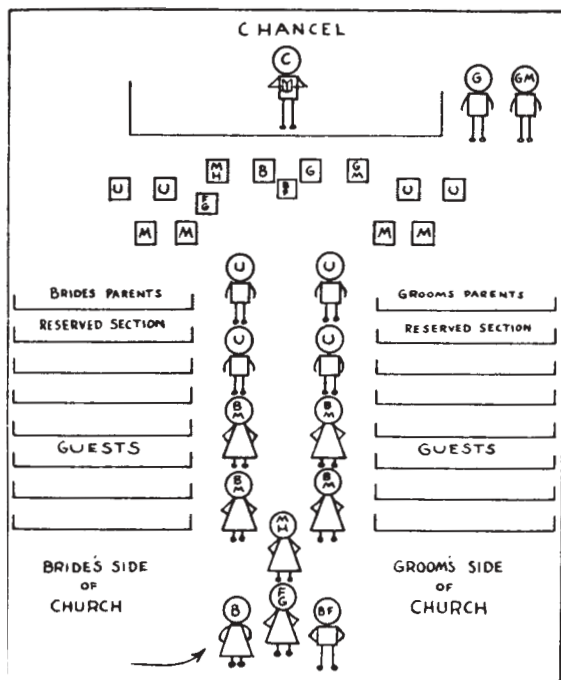
Pastors may find helpful the diagrams that follow. They are offered as typical arrangements and may be adapted to the local situation. The bride and groom should be given freedom of choice within the bounds of propriety.

THE PROCESSION

The wedding procession may vary. This diagram suggests four ushers and four bridesmaids, two of each on either side. Note the figures as they enter, then the station for each person.

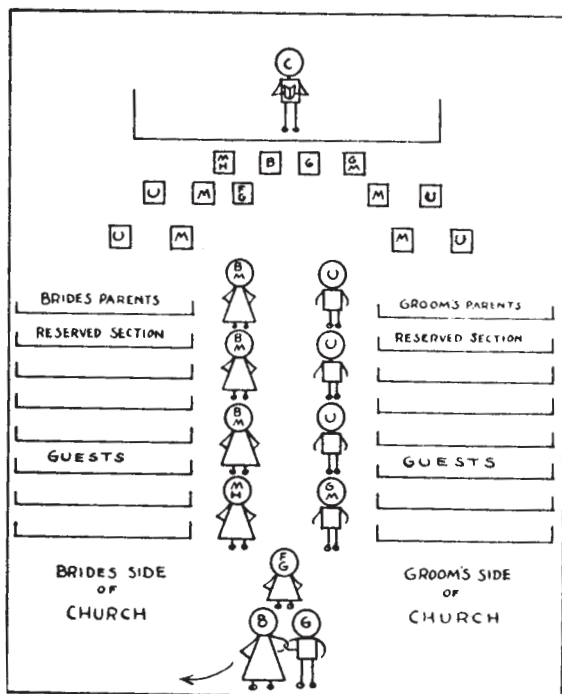
Meaning of symbols: B - Bride, G - Groom, MH - Maid (or Matron) of Honor, C - Clergy, GM - Groomsman, BF - Bride's Father, U - Usher, FG - Flower girl. A ring bearer may be included if desired.

It is understood that the pastor, the groom, and the groomsman will enter from the right side of the chancel whenever possible. Other participants will enter from the narthex.



THE RECESSION

Moving from their places, the wedding party leaves as indicated in the diagram, the bride and groom leading the way. The bridesmaids may walk side by side, followed by groomsmen/ushers, or walk with groomsmen/ushers. The best man will walk with the maid or matron of honor. The flower girl walks immediately behind the bride and groom.



THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MATRIMONY

INTRODUCTION

Among the many functions of a pastor, few are of greater spiritual importance or of lasting impact than the solemnization of marriage and the premarital counseling accompanying it. The sensitive pastor will correct the idea that the performing of wedding ceremonies is a perfunctory courtesy shown by the pastor to the church and community.

During preparation of a wedding, the pastor is shepherd, counselor, evangelist, and leader of worship. The importance of this ministry demands that a pastor approach it with prayer and meticulous preparation.

In every case the Free Methodist pastor is expected to contract with the couple for a series of premarital counseling sessions before consenting to marry them.

If either party is an unbeliever, it is expected that one of these sessions will be devoted to a Bible-study or salvation appointment with the purpose of leading them to Christ.

As a rule, weddings should take place in the sanctuary or chapel, attended by family and members of the church, thereby preserving the sacredness and dignity of the marriage ceremony. The couple will be blessed, and the church edified when the officiating minister guides them in planning a wedding that features the best in sacred music, uses a time-proven ritual such as prescribed in the *Book of Discipline*, and includes amenities that enhance an event of such large spiritual and social consequences.

Novel or extemporaneous rituals are discouraged. The ritual should be theologically sound, evidence the influence of historical usage, and be in a language of good taste. The ritual set forth by the Free Methodist Church meets these criteria.

To assist the pastor in determining the appropriateness of consenting to marry those who come to him, the following guide-lines are offered as interpretations of the *Book of Discipline*.

A. What assurances should a pastor have before consenting to marry a couple?

1. Our ministers shall not officiate at the marriage of any person under age unless parents or guardians are present or have given written consent, and unless two witnesses are present who know the couple (Par. A/341, Sec. 2).

2. If a member of the church anticipates marrying a divorcee, the person must have been divorced for reasons explained in Par. A/341, Sec. 5 of the *Book of Discipline*.
 3. If either or both parties are members of the church and either or both have been divorced according to Par. A/341, Sec. 5, they must seek and follow the counsel of the membership care committee according to Par. A/341, Sec. 7.
 4. When either or both parties are members of the church and either has been divorced for reasons other than those described in Par. A/341, Sec. 5, repentance and restoration must have occurred according to Par. A/341, Sec. 6.
 5. A ministerial member of an annual conference who is divorced or who intends to marry a divorced person, and in either case the spouse still lives, the minister must be cleared by the Board of Bishops (Par. A/553).
 6. When an unbelieving couple wish to be married and either or both have been divorced, the divorce(s) must have occurred for reasons stated in Par. A/341, Sec. 5.
 7. The persons to be married must be of the opposite sex (Pars. A/341, Sec. 1, A/342).
- B. When should a pastor exercise caution, even to the point of discouraging marriage?
1. When a member (or other believer) desires to marry an unbeliever (Par. A/341, Sec. 2).
 2. In the case of those under age, when either or both sets of parents withhold consent (Par. A/341, Sec. 2).
 3. When a ministerial member of a conference approaches marriage without first consulting with his or her spiritual leaders (Pars. A/341, Sec. 2, A/501, Sec. 5).
 4. When believers plan to be married, at any age, against the advice of mature acquaintances in the church (Par. A/341, Sec. 2).
 5. When a new convert with a divorce in his or her past hastens to remarry without sufficient time for personal and spiritual growth, review by the membership care committee, and adequate premarital counseling by the pastor.

No series of guidelines or disciplinary statements can adequately cover every possible set of circumstances. When encountering an unusual situation, the pastor is advised to counsel with the superintendent and/or with other mature and experienced pastors before agreeing to marry the couple.

COMMUNION AT WEDDINGS

In keeping with our practice of open communion, all believers present are invited to partake of the Lord's Supper. Par. A/910, Section 1 and 2 are normative for all such occasions. However, a special exception to section 2 is allowed at the discretion of the officiating pastor. A Christian bride and groom may request to be served alone as part of the wedding ceremony as a public witness to their faith in Christ and their determination to establish a Christian home.

The placement of the communion service in the ceremony should be after the vows have been exchanged.

The following introductory comments may be made immediately prior to the serving of communion to the wedding couple:

"For as much as _____ and _____ wish to confess before this assembly their desire to establish a Christian home founded upon Christ and to make their initial action as a married couple to be a visible communion with Him, please join with them in silent prayer during this solemn moment."

The service to the couple shall include:

1. The Invitation **
2. The Affirmation of Faith
3. The Collect
4. The Prayer of Consecration of the Elements

(Reading time: 3 minutes, 12 seconds)

** The Invitation may be as follows:

"Gratefully acknowledging God's loving grace in sending his Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross, providing for us forgiveness of sins and newness of life, draw near with faith and receive the holy sacrament. Please humbly kneel and make your honest confession to Almighty God."

THE WEDDING RITUAL

(At the time set, the man and woman to be married shall stand together facing the minister, the woman on the man's left, and the pastor shall say:)

Greeting

Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God and the presence of these witnesses to join together _____ and _____ in holy matrimony. Marriage is an honorable estate, instituted by God in the time of creation for the well-being of mankind. It is safeguarded by the laws of Moses, affirmed by the words of the prophets, and hallowed by the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Marriage is a union close and enduring, a relationship in which a man and a woman forsake all others to become one flesh. This abiding union illustrates the holy relationship between Christ and His church. Marriage is therefore not to be entered into by any lightly, but reverently, soberly, and in the fear of God.

(The pastor may lead the congregation in an appropriate hymn of worship, such as "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee"; "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty"; "All Creatures of Our God and King"; "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling.")

Charge

(Addressing the man and woman, the pastor shall say:)

_____ and _____, I charge you both as you stand in the presence of God to remember that covenant love alone will avail as the foundation of a happy and enduring home. Let Christ, who was loyal to His own unto death, be your example. Let the Apostle Paul be your teacher, who wrote: "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

If you keep this steadfast love ever before you and, remaining faithful to each other, resolutely endeavor to fulfill the vows you now will make, God's blessing will be upon you, and the home you establish will endure through life's every change.

Pledge

(Then the pastor shall say to the man, using his Christian name:)

_____, will you have _____ to be your wedded wife, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep yourself only for her, so long as you both shall live?

(The man shall answer:)

I will.

(Then the pastor shall say to the woman, using her Christian name:)

_____, will you have _____ to be your wedded husband, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, keep yourself only for him, so long as you both shall live?

(The woman shall answer:)

I will.

Parental Blessing

(Then shall the pastor say:)

Who gives _____ to be married to _____ ?

(The father of the woman, or whoever gives her in marriage, shall answer:)

I do.

(A recent innovation in wedding ceremonies is to have the parents of both the bride and groom express their support for this union.)

(Name of family members) _____ do you give your blessing to _____ and _____, and promise to do everything in your power to uphold them in their marriage?

(They shall answer:)

We give our blessing and promise our loving support.

or:

The marriage of _____ and _____ unites two families and creates a new one. They ask for your blessing.

(The pastor addresses the families:)

Do you give your blessing to this marriage?

(The family representatives respond:)

We do.

Pastoral Words

(The pastor may personalize the service at this point by presenting a brief wedding homily. The minister may base his/her remarks on scriptures such as: Genesis 1:26-31; Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24; Ruth 1:16-17; Proverbs 3:3-6; Song of Solomon 2:10-13; Isaiah 54:5-8; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 8; Psalms 103:1-5, 15-18; Psalm 150; Matthew 5:1-10; Matthew 19:3-6; Luke 6:36-38; John 2:1-11; Romans 8:31-39; Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33; Colossians 3:12-17; I John 4:7-16.)

Vows

(Then the pastor, receiving the hand of the woman from her father or other sponsor, shall cause the man with his right hand to take the woman by her right hand, and say after him:)

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death us do part, and thereto I pledge you my faith.

(Then shall they loose their hands, and the woman, with her right hand, shall take the man by his right hand, and shall likewise say after the minister:)

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death us do part, and thereto I pledge you my faith.

Exchange of Rings

(Then shall they again loose hands. The groomsman may give to the pastor a ring, which the pastor in turn will give to the groom, who will put it upon the third finger of the woman's left hand and, holding the ring, shall say after the pastor:)

This ring I give you in token and pledge of our constant faith and steadfast love.

(In case of a double ring ceremony, the pastor shall receive the other ring from the bridesmaid and shall deliver it to the woman to put upon the third finger of the man's left hand. The woman, holding the ring there, shall say after the pastor:)

This ring I give you in token and pledge of our constant faith and steadfast love.

Unity Candle

(The custom of having the bride and groom light a unity candle to symbolize their union in Christ is based on an ancient Christian tradition. The pastor may introduce the ceremony by saying:)

The bride and groom will now light the unity candle, signifying to all they are no longer two, but they are one in Christ Jesus, having left their parents to establish their own family under God.

Prayer

(Then the pastor shall say:)

Let us pray.

O Eternal God, creator and preserver of all mankind, giver of all spiritual grace, the author of everlasting life: send Your blessing upon this man and this woman whom we bless in Your name; that they, living faithfully together, may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant between them made, and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to Your laws through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pronouncement

(Then the pastor shall say:)

Forasmuch as _____ and _____ have consented together in holy wedlock and have witnessed the same before God and this company and have pledged their faith each to the other and have declared the same by joining hands (and by giving and receiving a ring), therefore, by the authority granted to me as a minister of Jesus Christ, I pronounce that they are husband and wife together, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder. Amen.

Benediction

(The man and woman then kneel, and the minister shall pray over them an extemporaneous prayer, prepared especially for the two of them.)

(The man and woman shall stand, and the minister shall pronounce over them the following benediction:)

Go forth into the world in peace.

Be of good courage.

Hold fast to that which is good.

Render to no one evil for evil.

Strengthen the faint hearted,

Support the weak,

Help the afflicted,

Show honor to all.

Love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the blessing of God Almighty,

The Father,

The Son,

And the Holy Spirit,

Be upon you and remain with you forever. Amen.

or:

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you, and

fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace; that you may faithfully live together in this life, and in the age to come have life everlasting. Amen.

or:

Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, keep you in his light and truth and love now and forever. Amen.

Presentation

(The pastor shall say:)

It is my privilege to present to you Mr. and Mrs. _____.

THE RENEWAL OF MARRIAGE VOWS

Dearly beloved, _____ and _____ have requested that they be given opportunity to renew their marriage vows on this occasion of their ____ wedding anniversary. Therefore, in the presence of God, their family, and all of you, their friends, we are pleased to honor their request.

We know that the commitment each made to the other at their marriage has been an enduring one. No doubt they have renewed it in their hearts many times in their years together.

The marriage union is an honorable estate, instituted of God, in which a man and a woman forsake all others to become one. To those who commit themselves to it in love and loyalty before God, there is blessing, peace, and completeness.

(Addressing the man and woman, the pastor shall say:)

_____ and _____, we are reminded in the Scriptures that the love of Christ for His church is an example for your devotion to one another. The Apostle Paul described such love by saying: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."

(1 Corinthians 13:4-8, NIV)

As the vows you renew today are fulfilled in your marriage, you will demonstrate the true nature of love as described by the Apostle.

(Then the pastor shall say to the man, using his Christian name:)

_____, this woman who stands beside you is your wife. Your life, character, and conduct contribute to her happiness. She has looked to you for encouragement, affection and steadiness. Your faithfulness to her and provision for her have been and will be a great blessing. Will you continue to live together with _____ in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health, and keep yourself only unto her, so long as you both shall live?

(The man shall answer:)

I will.

(Then the pastor shall say to the woman, using her Christian name:)

_____, this man who stands beside you is your husband. Your life and love contributes to his hopes and inspiration. He has looked to you for encouragement, cheerfulness, and confidence. By your faithfulness to Him and your faith in him, you have been and will be a great blessing. Will you continue to live together with _____ in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health, and keep yourself only unto him, so long as you both shall live?

(The woman shall answer:)

I will.

Since it is your desire to renew your marriage covenant today, you will repeat your vows in turn.

(Then the pastor causes the man and the woman to join hands. The man shall repeat after the pastor:)

I, _____, continue to take you, _____, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, and thereto I pledge you my faith.

(The woman shall repeat after the pastor:)

I, _____, continue to take you, _____, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, and thereto I pledge you my faith.

(Then they shall loose hands. If a ring ceremony is desired, the pastor will ask the husband to place the ring on his wife's finger and, holding the ring, shall say after the pastor:)

This ring I give you in token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love.

(The pastor will ask the wife to place the ring on her husband's finger and, holding the ring, shall say after the pastor:)

This ring I give you in token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love.

(Then the pastor shall say:)

Let us pray.

O eternal God, Creator and preserver of all mankind, giver of all spiritual grace, the author of everlasting life: send Your blessing upon this man and this woman for whom we pray in Your name; that they, living faithfully together may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant between them which they have renewed today, and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together, living according to Your laws through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Then the pastor shall say:)

Forasmuch as _____ and _____ have renewed their marriage vows and have witnessed the same before God, their family and friends, and have pledged their continuing faithfulness to each other (and as a reminder of their vows, have exchanged rings), therefore, by the authority granted to me as a minister of Jesus Christ, I reaffirm that they are husband and wife together, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Those who God has joined together, let not man put asunder. Amen.

(Then may the pastor pray over them an extemporaneous prayer, prepared especially for the couple, or may say the Lord's Prayer alone or in unison with the congregation.)

Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be Thy name.

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day, our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen.

(Then the pastor shall pronounce over them one of the following benedictions:)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace; now and in the world to come. Amen.

or:

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve and keep you; the Lord mercifully with His favor look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace; that you may so live together in this life that in the world to come you may have everlasting life. Amen.

FUNERAL / MEMORIAL SERVICES

Death brings special-care needs to any family and opens unique opportunities to ministry in the community of faith. Have a plan in place to provide comfort and assistance to every family upon receiving word of the death of a member of your parish. The pastor may be the first person notified, but the grieving family's care network, such as a small group or board of stewards, should immediately move to assist the grieving family.

Guidelines

A pastor is usually responsible for planning and conducting the funeral, but a care network is most effective in assisting the pastor in ministry to the family.

If you are new in the area be free to consult a local funeral director and/or a long-time pastor to learn of any local customs or ordinances unique to that place.

A pastor should be in contact with the family by phone and/or in person immediately upon learning of the death. In the case of an emergency, the pastor may need to rush to a hospital to counsel the family through difficult decisions such as organ donation, etc.

Upon notification of a death, pray with and for the family and their network of friends. Call one person from the care network, asking them to let others know of the need. The contact person should also call the family — asking how the group can help (e.g. going to the home or hospital, screening calls, assisting with media, setting up a meal plan, etc.). As soon as possible one or two care-givers should offer to be with the family.

Those comforting the bereaved should be alert for appropriate moments to offer prayer and/or read scripture. Be sensitive to the setting. An emergency room crisis, for example, may or may not be the best time and place to read scripture.

If a family member has died just before the pastor's arrival (or the mortician has not yet taken the body), gently urge the family members to view the body before it is taken to the mortuary. Some may resist, but if they can be so persuaded they will begin the necessary grieving process.

Both the care-givers and pastor must remember that death is not a time to offer advice or pat answers to unanswerable questions. Presence and sincere concern are helpful in themselves. Refrain from making trite statements about the deceased such as: "They look so natural" (No, they look dead.); "God must have wanted them for some greater purpose in heaven" (No, God does not will death on

anyone. His Son died to bring life). Instead, offer scriptural words of assurance that God loves and understands; that He is with them in their sorrow. If the deceased was a true believer, comments about the hope of the resurrection are usually appropriate.

Funeral Planning

As soon as comfortable, ask the family how you may assist in making arrangements. Never feel offended if another pastor is included in the plans for the funeral service. Assure the family that you are willing to help in whatever way they desire.

If you are to perform the funeral or memorial service, be sure to talk with the family to determine their wishes. Be patient, taking time to assist them in discussing the details among themselves. This conversation is particularly sensitive and in need of pastoral care if the death was unexpected.

If they are reluctant to initiate plans, be prepared to gently offer suggestions which you feel may be in harmony with the patterns of the family and the church. Make every effort to carry out their wishes. If changes must be made, be sure to confer with them before the funeral.

Simple funeral and graveside services are always appropriate. Though uncomplicated, let these ministries be rich in the spiritual resources of prayer and the scripture. The Gospel can be shared clearly, but should never be expressed in an attitude of judgment upon the deceased. Your task of evangelizing will be more effective later if your work of comforting and sustaining is done well at the moment.

The first step in planning for the funeral or memorial service is to prepare thoroughly, both spiritually and mentally. You may speak to more unchurched people at a funeral than on any other occasion.

A brief obituary may be read to bring essential facts regarding the deceased before the assembly of relatives and friends. This information usually comes from the funeral director, to which you may add additional comments from your own knowledge.

A brief story of the life of the deceased, spoken in appreciation of the quality of life lived and including notable contributions to the good of the church and society, may be appropriate. This information should be obtained from the family during an "interview time" when the funeral arrangements are discussed.

Your Presence Makes a Difference

There are two or three times when it is important to be with the family, depending on local customs.

One time is before the first viewing hours, when the family sees their loved one in the casket for the first time. Plan to arrive a few minutes before the viewing, offering a scripture reading (for example Psalms 34:1-4, 8-9, 15-18), then a brief prayer for comfort. Stay with the family during this private viewing time.

Another time is the final viewing, before the casket is closed for the funeral.

Stay close to the bereaved family at every possible moment before, during, and after the service. Most funeral directors will make arrangements for you to meet with the family in a side room for moments of prayer and reflection immediately before the service.

Immediately following the interment, go to the side of each family member and offer words of comfort or simply listen in silent love.

It is a worthy practice to return with the family to their home after the service. Some of the most effective ministries of comfort and understanding can be accomplished at this time. Tension has been released in the satisfaction that everything possible has been done to lay to rest the body of the loved one. You will get acquainted with other members of the family and their circle of friends. Lasting and fruitful contacts are made at such a time.

The Order of Service

Honor the requests of the family wherever possible. A service held in a home or mortuary will usually be less formal and quite brief. Local practice is usually a sufficient guide.

While brevity and simplicity are usually appropriate, the service for a prominent citizen or leader of the church, in which several ministers participate, will require more planning and time.

Sample Orders of Service

Order 1

Musical Prelude

Opening Scriptural Sentences

Invocation

Hymn

Scripture Lesson

Pastoral Prayer

Funeral Sermon

Benediction or Closing Prayer

Order 2

Instrumental Music (Hymns of Comfort)

Scriptural Sentences

Prayer of Invocation

Hymn

Scripture Selections

Pastoral Prayer

Hymn

Obituary or Life Story

Memorial Address or Funeral Sermon

Hymn

Benediction or Closing Prayer

Instrumental Music

Order 3

Hymns of Comfort

Scripture Reading

Prayer

Funeral Message

Prayer

Order for Graveside Service

Scripture Reading

Poem or Committal

Benediction or Closing Prayer

Hymns Suitable for Use at a Funeral

HWC - The Hymnal For Worship and Celebration

HFL - Hymns of Faith and Life

50	29	The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want
43	43	Great Is Thy Faithfulness
52	59	O God, Our Help in Ages Past
8	63	Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
364	86	My Jesus, I Love Thee
218	177	I Know that My Redeemer Lives
240	192	When He Shall Come
410	268	My Faith Looks Up to Thee
205	273	And Can It Be?
466	277	Jesus, Lover of My Soul
435	352	What a Friend We Have in Jesus
460	381	All the Way My Savior Leads Me
490	387	Loved with Everlasting Love
204	392	Rock of Ages! Cleft for Me
186	456	On a Hill Far Away
	460	Abide with Me! Fast Falls the Eventide

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Brief Passages

Psalms 103:13; 42:11; 46:1-2; 90:1-2; 91:1-2; 27:1; 23:4;
1 Corinthians 15:20, 22; Psalms 124:8 with 2 Timothy 1:10;
2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Numbers 23:10; Revelation 21:7; 14:13.

Longer Passages

Psalms 27:1, 3, 5, 11, 13; 139:1-2, 6-12; Matthew 5:3-4, 6-8; Romans
8:14, 16-18, 31-35, 37-39; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 35-44, 54-58;
Matthew 25:31-37, 40; Hebrews 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 2:9-11;
1 Peter 1:3-9; Revelation 7:9-17; 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

For a Child

2 Samuel 12:18-20, 22-23.

For a Youth

John 11:21-28, 32-36; Ecclesiastes 12:1.

For the Older Christian

Job 5:26; Psalm 92:13-14.

For the Committal at Graveside

Matthew 5:4 with John 14:27 and Matthew 18:14;
Malachi 3:17; Hebrews 13:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14; 1 Corinthians
15:49, 53; Psalms 23:4; Isaiah 41:10, 13; Psalms 103:11, 13-14;
1 John 3:2 with 1 Corinthians 13:12; John 11:25-26 with Revelation
1:17-18; Psalms 46:1-3 with Deuteronomy 33:27.

THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

(The pastor may use the following order of worship at the church or chapel.)

Opening Sentences, such as:

“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”

“For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

Invocation

O Eternal God, our Father, from whom we come and to whom we go, grant us the favor of Your divine presence at this time in our earthly pilgrimage; assure us by Your Spirit that the one we serve, even Jesus, has conquered death and is alive forevermore; enable us to view our temporal lives in the light of the eternal; and so may our spirits grow calm and our vision clear. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

Hymn (by the congregation, musicians, or organist) (Optional)

Obituary and/or Tributes (Optional)

Old Testament Scriptures, such as: Psalms 23, 90, 121

New Testament Scriptures, such as: John 14:1-6;

1 Corinthians 15:35-49; 2 Corinthians 5:1-5.

Hymn (by the congregation, musicians, or organist) (Optional)

Meditation

Prayer (for the family and community)

Benediction (not used if the service is to continue at the graveside)

(The pastor shall at the appropriate time at the cemetery say:)

“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die” (John 11:25-26).

“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold ...” (Job 19:25-27).

“For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world” (1 Timothy 6:7).

“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

(The following may also be used at the cemetery.)

“Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way where I am going. Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me’” (John 14:1-6).

(Then shall the pastor say:)

Inasmuch as Almighty God, in His wise providence, has taken out of this world our deceased brother (sister, or child), we therefore commit this mortal body to the ground, looking for the general resurrection in the last day and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose Second Coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in Him shall be changed, and made like unto His own glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.

(The pastor may pray extemporaneously or use the following:)

The Collect

O merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, in whom whosoever believeth shall live, though he die, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Him shall not die eternally, we meekly beseech You, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, that when we shall depart this life we may rest in Him, and at the general resurrection on the last day may be found acceptable in Your sight and receive that blessing which Your well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all who love and fear You, saying, “Come, you blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.” Grant this, we beseech You, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.
or:

Forasmuch as the spirit of the departed has returned to God who gave it, we therefore commit *his/her* body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; looking for the general resurrection in the last day, and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ; at whose coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and the corruptible bodies

of those who sleep in Him shall be changed and made like unto His own glorious body; according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto himself. Amen.

or:

Forasmuch as the spirit of this departed loved one has returned to God who gave it, we therefore tenderly commit *his/her* body to the ground in sure trust and certain hope in the power and love of Christ our Lord; at whose divine call they that sleep in Him shall one day rise to stand with Him, and hear with all saints the welcome summons: "Enter into Your Master's joy." For His is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

or, for a child:

In the sure hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commit the body of this child to the ground. The Lord bless *him/her* and keep *him/her*, the Lord make His face to shine upon *him/her* and be gracious unto *him/her*, the Lord lift up His countenance upon *him/her* and give *him/her* peace, both now and evermore. Amen.

Benediction

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

CHAPTER II
THE PASTOR AS SHEPHERD
THE MINISTRY OF PASTORAL CARE

The Apostle Peter urged pastors to care for God's flock like a shepherd (1 Peter 5:2). To care is to share in the joys and burdens of others: "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15). True pastoral care requires professional skill, but more importantly, a caring concern and a shepherd's heart. Beware of cold performance in ministry that does not enter into the personal lives of your people.

Like no other professional, the pastor is allowed the high privilege to be with his or her people in the important times of life such as birth, conversion/baptism, marriage and death. There will be many other occasions of celebration or crisis where the pastor is invited. At such times the pastor is a representative of Christ.

The caring pastor ministers to the flock in many ways, including the spirit in which he or she conducts worship, coordinates administration, and oversees the educational, evangelistic and outreach endeavors. But the loving concern shown to individuals is remembered most by grateful parishioners.

The 1995 General Conference recognized the responsibilities, and therefore, the requirements, of ministers. For those called to deal with the souls of people and who lead them in spiritual development the following qualities and skills for pastoral care are needed:

1. Loves his or her family as Christ loves the Church.
2. Responds appropriately and warmly to people.
3. Embodies a passion for making disciples.
4. Ensures appropriate care for the people of God.
5. Builds up people and inspires hope.
6. Demonstrates interpersonal skills.
7. Resolves conflict effectively.

Book of Discipline, Par. A/504

Through these natural gifts and trained skills the Holy Spirit makes ministry effective. The 1995 General Conference put spiritual qualifications first for the ordained ministry. Read and consider these carefully and prayerfully:

Spiritual Qualifications:

1. Committed to Jesus Christ as Lord.
2. Evidences integrity through holiness of heart and life.
3. Displays the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
4. Receives and gives forgiveness.

5. Possesses healthy self-esteem and maintains a positive attitude.
6. Demonstrates faith, creativity and initiative.
7. Respects people regardless of race, gender or economic status.
8. Models a teachable spirit.

The shepherd figure is an appropriate analogy for pastoral care. It conveys the responsibility and privilege of knowing each member of the flock and in turn being known by them. But in a growing congregation this cannot be done alone. The pastor-shepherd will recruit and train under-shepherds in the care of the flock of God. Sharing this ministry with the laity creates a loving fellowship. The Body grows as each member serves and cares for others. Blessed is the pastor-shepherd who leads a caring congregation. Such a faithful pastor will have the appreciation of the flock and the approval of the Chief Shepherd.

Specific Duties of Pastors

By action of the 1995 General Conference the personal qualifications for ordained ministry in the Free Methodist Church are described in paragraphs A/502 through A/506 in the *Book of Discipline*. At the instruction of the Board of Bishops, the responsibilities of pastors as found in previous issues of the *Book of Discipline* are included here.

The duties of a pastor who has the charge of a pastoral appointment are:

1. To look after the spiritual and temporal interests of the church or churches to which appointed.
2. To receive and dismiss members according to the *Book of Discipline*; provided, however, that no person shall be recorded on the register as "withdrawn at his/her own request" until the action is approved by the official board.
3. To see that the other pastors on the pastoral charge are exemplary in conduct and are well cared for.
4. To examine each of the leaders concerning the method of leading the Christian growth group (class), observe which leaders are the most useful and have these meet the other groups as often as possible, and see that all the leaders are persons not only of sound judgment, but truly devoted to God.
5. To hold services which contribute to wholesomeness among the people.
6. To give instruction concerning the meaning and observance of the Lord's Supper.
7. To celebrate the Lord's Supper quarterly and more often when possible.*
8. To take care that every society is duly supplied with books.
9. To provide an exact count of all members to the annual conference for publication in the *Yearbook*, recording the names of local

- elders, local deacons, local ministerial candidates, and lay ministers.
10. To enter the following information in the permanent record book furnished by the official board as prescribed in Paragraph A/402.3, Sec. 4:
 - a. A complete and up-to-date account of all baptisms, weddings, and funerals;
 - b. A list of the names and addresses of all members, with time and method of reception, date of birth and baptism, completion of pastoral instruction classes of each, and time and reason for termination of membership.
 11. To report quarterly to the official board the entries made in the record book during the quarter.
 12. To leave to the next pastor an account of the society, with the permanent record book, and a list of the subscribers to our periodicals.
 13. To enforce vigorously, but calmly, all the rules of the society.
 14. As soon as there are four believers in any place to put them into a Christian growth group (cell).
 15. To promote church planting at the general, conference, and local level; to seek opportunities to plant new churches; to encourage the pastoral charge to sponsor a church planting project.
 16. To meet the societies and Christian growth groups (classes); to visit the sick; to visit all persons in the congregation whenever practicable, and train others to do the same.
 17. To welcome the use of all means of proclamation and evangelism which can be effectively implemented and financed.
 18. To be sure that none are transferred from one society to another without a letter of transfer from the pastor.
 19. To recommend everywhere decency and cleanliness.
 20. To use the membership covenant once a year in every society.
 21. To see that the trustees are elected and that the real estate belonging to the church is secured according to the civil laws.
 22. To see that no steps are taken involving the society in financial liability, without the consent of the official board.
 23. To preach on systematic and proportionate giving, encouraging our people to tithe their incomes, warning the people of the evil consequences to themselves and the church of God of covetousness and withholding of their means from supporting the gospel. (See Par. A/804.)
 24. To see that all financial obligations ordered by the conference are raised in full.
 25. To send the name and address of any person of the constituency who moves from the community to the pastor or superintendent of the Free Methodist church in the conference to which such person moves. (See Par. B/481, Sec. 3:e)
 26. To see that our members keep their covenants with regard to financial and contract obligations, and membership in secret societies (Par. A/321) and labor organizations (Par. A/338).
 27. To employ Free Methodist evangelists whenever possible. Pastors shall not employ evangelists who are not members of our

church without first consulting with and securing the consent of the superintendent and the official board.

28. To provide for the culture of converts by such instruction and encouragement as will help them go on into a definite experience of entire sanctification; to inform youth and preparatory members of the privileges, duties, and responsibilities of membership, using particularly *Belonging*, the *Book of Discipline*, the history of the Free Methodist Church, and such other materials as the church provides; and to form classes for the purpose wherever practicable, but in no case neglecting to see that each person receives this care.
29. To remind the board of Christian education of the urgency of using Free Methodist Sunday school curriculum materials in every Sunday school class and to promote the use of the denominational magazine by every member.
30. To provide opportunities for local ministerial candidates to determine and develop their gifts for ministry in such ways as:
 - a. proclaiming the gospel;
 - b. assisting the pastor in visitation;
 - c. assisting in conducting public worship services; and
 - d. participating fully in the local church program, witnessing to the unsaved, winning them to Christ, and nurturing them in Christian living.
31. To perform the following duties on special occasions:
 - a. to observe Christian College Day;
 - b. to hold a Children's Day service the second Sunday in June;
 - c. to preach a sermon on practical charity (Par. B/463, sec.6);
 - d. to read Wesley's sermon on Evil Speaking;
 - e. to use the membership covenant once a year in every society;
 - f. to see that a day of fasting and prayer is planned in every society on the first day of each month and at such other times as required by the *Book of Discipline* (Pars. A/407, A/430(2), A/442, B/481(2:d);
 - g. to foster Sunday schools and child evangelism;
 - h. to promote on a regular basis spiritual growth and renewal through revival meetings and revival preaching; and
 - i. to encourage and engage in regular prison ministry.
32. To promote Free Methodist missions through a year-round program of missions emphasis in cooperation with the local board of world missions and the local missions coordinator. (See Par. B/496.)
33. To continually focus on equipping members for works of service, helping each one to exercise their God-given gifts in appropriate ways.
34. To encourage by example and instruction the establishment of cells and the multiplication of the same.
35. To lead the church in strengthening the "desired outcomes" noted on page 226 of this Handbook.

* All persons appointed as pastors are authorized to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to their respective congregations.

PASTORAL CARE IN CRISIS

A large portion of the pastor's work will be with those who are in trouble. Affliction, disguised in many forms, stalks the pathway of life. Troubled hearts need the ministry of a spiritual shepherd who understands and cares.

Sometimes disappointment or serious illness shatters the hopes of a household. Financial reverses mar the tranquility of a well-ordered family. A wayward son, an erring daughter, a reckless brother bring sadness, disgrace, and heartbreak to a home. A tragic accident or untimely death smashes ruthlessly into another home. Hearts are aching and need the ministry of comfort and understanding.

Into such tragic hours as these the pastor is privileged to come with a ministry of kindness, understanding, and helpfulness in Christ's name.

Do not hesitate. Go immediately. Comfort your people.

If conflict or misunderstanding has come between members of your congregation, you may help to heal a wound or right a wrong. Those you serve will love you ever afterward. A frank talk with those involved may halt misunderstanding or heal a festering sore. By dealing honestly in love you may save further tragedy. Nathan did a full day's work when he dealt frankly with David, "You are the man."

If a son or daughter has fallen into open disgrace, go at once to the home. You may be able to give wise and confidential counsel. This is no time to condemn, but a time to show an understanding spirit.

If tidings of serious sickness come, lose no time in visiting that home; a soul may be near eternity and need your prayers.

When a parishioner falls into temptation, perhaps unaware of tragic consequences, the pastor-shepherd will exercise the ministry of loving confrontation and rescue, just as a shepherd firmly uses his staff to save a wayward sheep. Speak the truth in love to help one of the flock from wandering far from the fold of God's protection.

When death has come, do not try to stop the tears of those in sorrow or deep grief. Tears relieve troubled hearts and often keep them from breaking. Gradually, gently, lead the sorrowing to think of the other side. True comfort comes when we think things through in the light of the eternal purposes of God for each of us. An appropriate prayer, placed naturally at the proper moment, will help greatly.

If it seems wise to read the Scriptures in the home where trouble has come, read briefly, then pray in the spirit of consolation with direct reference to those in trouble. Use whole portions of Scripture where possible rather than scattered verses, but do not let the selection

become long because the powers of concentration suffer when trouble comes.

Scriptures for Visitation in Crisis

Scriptures for the Troubled:

Psalms 46	Isaiah 12:1-2
Isaiah 26:3-9	Isaiah 43:1-3
John 14:1-7, 27	Romans 8:28, 31, 37-39
1 Peter 5:7-11	

Scriptures for Use in Time of Sickness:

Psalms 23	Psalms 27:1-6
Psalms 46:10-11	Psalms 111
Psalms 121	Isaiah 40:3-5, 11, 29-31
John 10:11-18	Revelation 21:2-4

Scriptures for the Christian Whose Life Is Ebbing Away:

Psalms 51:10-12, 15	Isaiah 55:1a, 6-13
Matthew 11:28-30	Luke 2:29-32
John 3:16-21	John 11:25-26
Hebrews 12:1-2	

Scriptures for Use in the Home Where Death Has Come:

Psalms 31:24, 19, 20a	Deuteronomy 33:27
Psalms 34:4-5, 7-9	Psalms 103:1-18
2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 16-18	
James 1:2-4, 12	

MEMBERSHIP CARE

Membership integrity is a hallmark of the authentic Body of Christ. Primary responsibility for maintaining an honorable membership role rests with the pastor. The task is too demanding to be done alone. Sensitive, dedicated, and knowledgeable members of the congregation must work with the pastor to achieve and maintain membership integrity.

The 1985 General Conference made provision to assist the local church by establishing the Membership Care Committee. (See *Book of Discipline*, Pars. A/402.3, Sec. 10, and A/404.4.) Subsequently, a Membership Care Committee Handbook was prepared to provide practical assistance to pastor and people of each local church. Every pastor is urged to become familiar with this handbook in order to guide the local Membership Care Committee in its work.

The Membership Care Committee Handbook is available through Light & Life Communications, 1-800-348-2513.

Membership care should continue when members move from their ministry area. Forms are available from the Board of Bishops office which can be used to alert fellow Free Methodist pastor(s) that a member(s) from your congregation is moving to their region. Using these forms would also provide you with a record of your timely response and pastoral follow-up. If a member moves to a region where no Free Methodist Church is located, it is recommended that the form be sent to the pastor of a sister denomination. This may require some research to assure that you are connecting your friend to a healthy congregation.

SERVICE OF PRAYER FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN

Hymns

Old Testament Readings *

Corporate Prayer **

Pastoral Prayer

New Testament Scriptures **

Sermon on Forgiveness

Prayer at the Altar

Presentation of Forgiveness Cards ***

Prayer by pastor for each person responding

(The pastor must exercise complete confidentiality in both the prayer and the handling of forgiveness cards.)

Opportunity for Testimonies

Hymn

Closing Prayer of Thanksgiving

Benediction

* SCRIPTURE READINGS

Old Testament: Ezra 10:1; Psalms 34:4-18; 41; 85:1-7; 103; Isaiah 43:25; 44:22; 44:7; 57:14-21; Ezekiel 18:31.

New Testament: Matthew 6:12-25; 18:21-35; Luke 15:11-13; 17:14; 18:9-14; Acts 3:19; Ephesians 1:7; 4:32; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 John 1:9.

** CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

Almighty and most merciful God, we acknowledge and confess we have sinned against Your holiness. We have not loved You with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbor as ourselves. We plead with You, O God, to forgive us for our shortcomings. Help us to amend our ways, and in Your mercy direct our future paths so that Your love and goodness may ever reign unrivaled in our hearts. May we henceforth always walk in Your ways, blamelessly, and follow in the footsteps of Jesus, Your Son, to our life's end. In His name we pray. Amen.

or:

Almighty Father, Lord of heaven and earth, we confess we have sinned against You and You only. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us according to Your goodness. In Your great grace, blot out our offenses. Wash us thoroughly from our wickedness and cleanse us from our sins; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

*** FORGIVENESS CARD

I confess

It involves a broken relationship with (if appropriate)

I forego all revenge

I seek the forgiveness of Christ __, others __, and the church __. I accept Christ's forgiveness now __.

Signature

RESTORATION OF ERRANT MEMBERS

The following is an adaptation of the covenant approved for the restoration of pastors under discipline for use by local church membership care committees or official boards in the restoration of errant lay members. It is not a mandate or official form but a guide for assisting the local church in maintaining membership integrity by restoring those who have erred.

MODEL COVENANT OF RESTORATION

This agreement is entered into as a covenant by and between, a lay member of the _____ Free Methodist Church and the (official board, membership care committee, other group) of this church. The subject and the committee acknowledge and accept the introductory statements, and agree to abide by the covenants and promises in this agreement, all for the purpose of transcending past disciplinary action, acknowledging repentance and forgiveness of the subject, and seeking full reconciliation within the congregation and the Free Methodist Church through the restoration process and procedures detailed in this *Covenant of Restoration*.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS

Whereas, we believe that Christians who have willfully sinned and severed their relationship with Christ may by repentance before God be granted forgiveness and restoration of their relationship with Christ; and that God has given responsibility and authority to the church to discipline a member for conduct unbecoming a Christian and to restore a penitent believer through loving reproof, counsel and acceptance; and

Whereas, the subject has submitted to the discipline of this church, repented from such conduct which has been confessed to God and the committee, and has demonstrated genuine sorrow; and

Whereas, it is the hope and desire of this church to go beyond accepting the repentance and forgiveness of the subject to nurturing full restoration to membership and service in this church

TERMS OF AGREEMENT

Now therefore, in consideration of the foregoing statements, it is hereby covenanted and agreed before God that:

1. **Authority.** The subject accepts the authority of the committee and understands that growth and reconciliation through the restoration process requires submission to the guidance and counsel of the committee, which retains judgment and discretion to counsel, direct,

and determine satisfaction of the goals and agreements in this *Covenant of Agreement*.

2. **Goal of Restoration.** The parties agree to pursue every effort that love can suggest to assure complete restoration, with the express goal of seeing the subject returned to membership and service in the Free Methodist Church.

3. **Restitution for Wrongs.** Where the effects of wrongdoing have touched the lives of others, the parties acknowledge that reconciliation and restitution is required for complete healing to occur. The subject agrees that, with guidance and counsel from the committee, he or she will make every effort to seek individual forgiveness and, where appropriate, make restitution for wrongs committed which have caused harm to others.

4. **Relationship With the Church.** The support of the local church is essential to complete restoration through sharing renewal and spiritual growth, regaining confidence, and re-establishing credibility. The subject agrees to follow the guidance and counsel of the committee to maintain and expand relationships with the local church and its members, and to worship and associate regularly with them.

5. **Personal Growth and Development.** In order to assure continued personal growth and development, the subject agrees to seek out and accept the counsel and guidance of the committee for additional direction and resources which will foster the goals and purposes of this *Covenant of Restoration*.

6. **Meetings.** To assure the ongoing counsel and guidance of the committee the subject agrees to meet with them on a regular basis as agreed by both parties.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the parties agree in the presence of God, and through their testament and signatures, to abide by and fulfill this *Covenant of Restoration*.

_____ Signature

_____ Date

Local church committee by:

PASTORAL SABBATICAL GUIDELINES

At the instruction of the 1995 General Conference, the Board of Bishops prepared the following set of guidelines to assist local churches and pastors in planning a sabbatical leave for the pastor and family.

1. A sabbatical leave is both a recognition of past service and an opportunity to enrich future ministry.
2. Time of service requirements for eligibility and the amount of lead time needed to process applications shall be established by each conference.
3. After consultation with the superintendent, sabbatical leave shall be agreed upon between the pastor and the local church before applying to the MEG Board or MAC. Preparation for sabbatical leave has two parts: The agreement with the church containing arrangements for pulpit supplies, pastoral care and administrative oversight during the absence of the pastor and the sabbatical plan to be submitted to the MEG Board for approval.
4. Requests for sabbatical leave shall be filed with the superintendent and approved by the MEG Board. Such request shall include a plan for use of sabbatical time and the expected benefits from the experience.
5. At the conclusion of the sabbatical leave a report shall be filed with the MEG Board describing the activities and benefits of the sabbatical leave and a report made to the church.
6. Sabbatical leave is not to be used for personal financial advantage.

— April 25, 1996

CHAPTER III

THE PASTOR AS ADMINISTRATOR

(Summary of 1995 General Conference Actions*)

Philosophy of Membership

Preamble

In harmony with our mission statement that we "... invite into membership and equip for ministry all who respond in faith" the New Testament model of repentance, faith and baptism shall constitute the primary requirements for membership. This makes membership in the Free Methodist Church as nearly as possible synonymous with entering into the Body of Christ. We are open to all whom God has awakened and support them with the healing and equipping power of the Holy Spirit in His church. The principles of Christian conduct as expressed in Pars. A/315-342 are to be the maturing life goals of all who are invited into membership.

Holiness

The church pursues holiness in its most comprehensive meaning of loving God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves. This call to holiness reaffirms our historical values and heightens our responsibility to openly confront contemporary sin, be it addiction, selfishness, evil speaking, or anything else that dishonors the name of God. (See Par. A/352.1, *Book of Discipline*)

Disciple-making

The Free Methodist Church engages in evangelization and disciple-making with intentional concern for the spiritual growth of every constituent, whether seeker, new Christian or long-time Christian.

Christian Conduct

The goal of Christian maturity is described in Chapter III of the *Book of Discipline*. Entry Requirements: Repentance, Faith and Baptism

The primary requirements for membership in the Free Methodist Church are repentance, faith and baptism in keeping with the New Testament model for entering the Body of Christ.

Conditions for Admission into Membership:

- a. awakening to God, a desire to seek God (Par. A/301);
- b. assent to participate in the maturing opportunities offered by the church such as classes, Bible studies and small groups (Par.A/307);
- c. evidence of genuine conversion (Par. A/302);
- d. receiving the catechism of baptism and the sacrament of baptism,

or, if baptized in infancy, giving public assent to the baptismal covenant (Par. A/124);

- e. completing the approved course of instruction for prospective members;
- f. commitment to the membership covenant (Pars. A/154-160), and the Christian Conduct section of the *Book of Discipline* (Pars. A/315-342);
- g. interview by the pastor and/or membership care committee, who will verify the person's readiness for membership (Pars. A/306-307);
- h. approval by the church's official board upon recommendation of the membership care committee (Par. A/404.4, Sec.4); and
- i. giving affirmative answers to the questions for membership before a public meeting of the church (Par. A/353.1).

The sequence of the above steps for membership is the normative order but may vary according to individual need. The purpose is to allow new believers or transfer members to:

- a. identify life issues and receive assistance;
- b. identify theological/doctrinal questions and find answers; and
- c. learn the mission of the Free Methodist Church and make commitment to it.

A local church or annual conference may designate steps 1:a-c as preparatory membership. The ritual for reception into preparatory membership may be used (Par. A/360).

Selecting Leaders (Par. A/402, Sec. 2)

To assure the spiritual health and growth of the local church, members of the several boards and committees whose task is to give substance and direction to the church's mission should be persons of spiritual depth, vital faith, faithful church attendance and be in agreement with the doctrine, conduct and mission of the Free Methodist Church.

Nominating committees and societies should consult guidelines for choosing leadership found in Exodus 18:21, Acts 7:3, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, and Titus 1:5-9. Persons chosen as delegate(s) to annual conference, leadership positions, teaching assignments and public ministry shall demonstrate a lifestyle in harmony with the Scriptures above and Chapters I and III of the *Book of Discipline*.

Society Meeting (Par. A/402.1)

The meeting shall be announced at least ten days in advance. Absentee voting is not permitted.

In preparation for electing lay leaders the pastor shall call attention to scriptural qualifications for leadership as found in Matthew 20:26-28, John 15:12-17, Acts 6:1-7, and Ephesians 4:1-17.

Annual Conference Delegates

The society shall, from their number, elect by ballot delegates to the annual conference according to the provisions in Par. A/277.

Delegates to annual conference may be nominated by the nominating committee if the society so chooses, presenting at least two nominations for each delegate position for election by ballot (Par. 402.1, Sec. 4).

The election of delegate(s) and reserve delegate(s) shall be by separate ballot and shall each require a majority vote of those present and voting. Adult members, with the exception of conference ministerial candidates, are eligible to be a delegate. However, a delegate who is received as a conference ministerial candidate during the current session shall not be disqualified to serve as a delegate.

Delegates serve as liaison between the society and its appointed personnel, as well as between the conference and the society. Their primary tasks include: representing the local church at annual conference; participating in conference activities as requested; representing the church to the superintendent; preserving unity within the body by promoting peace and harmony between the members.

Lay delegates are to conform to the conditions outlined for leaders in Par. A/402, Sec. 2:b and support the pastor and staff in planning and promotion of Great Commission strategies.

Nominating Committee

The objective of the nomination process is to identify persons of spiritual maturity, giftedness and fruitfulness in ministry, and to provide appropriate roles for each to participate in the overall mission of the church.

At the annual meeting the society shall elect by ballot from its adult membership a standing nominating committee of not fewer than three or more than nine persons, plus the senior pastor. The society shall consider persons who are spiritually mature and who understand and actively pursue the mission of the church.

The society shall determine the size, duration and rotation of terms including any term limits. Nominations to the nominating committee may be received in advance. If so, a form for nominations shall be provided at least one month prior to the election. The official board shall process these nominations and provide a ballot including all available persons. Nominations may be received from the floor if the society has so determined in advance by a standing rule. The nominating committee may not present nominations for the next nominating committee.

Duties: The nominating committee shall recommend to the society persons to serve in the leadership roles of standing committees or boards, (which may include two-thirds of the pastor's cabinet according to Par. A/404.3, Sec. 1); treasurer of the society; director of Christian education and the age-level directors; directors or chairs of the board of stewards, trustees, evangelism and church growth, missions, finance and stewardship; and other leadership positions as determined by the society. Ministry teams of these boards and committees may be nominated by the respective directors or by the nominating committee as determined by the society.

The report of the nominating committee shall be made available to the society at least ten (10) days prior to the election.

Treasurer

The treasurer shall be an adult member of the Free Methodist Church and shall keep a record of all monies raised and of the manner in which they are expended and shall be responsible for furnishing in writing a detailed financial statement monthly and a full report to the annual society meeting.

To safeguard the treasurer it is recommended that the official board elect tellers who shall count each offering and provide the necessary documentation for the annual audit, which forms the treasurer shall make available for the audit.

It is also recommended that a financial secretary be elected if the size of the congregation and amount of funds handled make it advisable. Duties of the financial secretary shall be defined by the official board.

Upon the joint request of the pastor and the finance committee, the financial books shall be made available for examination.

Official Board

The official board shall be composed of the senior pastor and ministry leaders in the church as determined by the society. It is recommended that there shall be no less than seven and no more than twelve members. At least one delegate and one trustee* shall be included. It is also recommended that no member, with the exception of the pastor, shall serve for more than six consecutive years.

Official board members shall be representative members of the local church, faithful in worship attendance, involved in ministry, and be supportive financially at least to the level of the tithe.

The official board shall organize itself to provide oversight for the ministries of the church according to need. It shall give attention to providing leadership for evangelism and church

growth, world missions, Christian education and the spiritual health of the congregation.

Evaluation of Ministry Effectiveness

The revised procedure for the evaluation of pastor(s) and congregation is found in Par. A/403 of the *Book of Discipline*.

There is no longer provision for a pastoral return survey and vote on the return of the pastor.

* Unless found elsewhere in the *Handbook*

LEADING THE OFFICIAL BOARD

Each established church has an official board which serves as the nerve center of the congregation. It is a clearing house for the desires of the body of believers, makes decisions, prepares important proposals to the society, implements board actions, and communicates the results to the entire body. A church may be blessed with an efficient, well-trained, smoothly operating board. On the other hand, it may become ineffective, dispirited, and of questionable value, depending, in many instances, upon the attitude and leadership skills of the pastor.

Every pastor should have as a goal to assist the official board to become what it is intended to be. One begins by being willing to accept, train, and lead the members in their individual and collective roles. (See preceding section on *1995 General Conference Actions, Official Board*.)

To make a preliminary evaluation of the official board, use the following checklist of questions:

1. Does the church understand its mission with a related set of priorities?
2. Do the elected and appointed leaders understand their ministry responsibilities?
3. Is a sense of accountability established by periodic reporting of plans and progress by leaders and committees?
4. Are the board meetings conducted in a manner that builds morale and accomplishes essential business?
5. Are the meetings scheduled on a regular basis and well attended?

If an official board is unsure regarding 1 and 2 above, the first responsibility of the pastor is to train them with guidance from the superintendent, as needed.

Purchase a sufficient number of copies for distribution among official board members. Assign readings to be followed by your teaching, either at a day-long retreat or in segments of study as a part

of the agenda in successive meetings of the board. Members of your church with the gift of teaching might well assist you.

The church that has a clearly stated mission, a carefully thought out set of priorities, and goals “owned” by the congregation is in a position to achieve great things for God. The official board itself is a proper place to discuss, refine, and adopt these items.

The *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church (1995 edition) describes the composition and work of the official board in Par. A/402.3. The duties of the membership care committee, board of missions, board of evangelism and church growth, board of Christian education, pastor’s cabinet, stewards, trustees, and other officers are further enlarged in Pars. A/404 - 404.5, and A/850 -854.

Larger churches often assign specific responsibilities to trustees and stewards. For example, trustees (singly or with support teams) may be responsible for business, building maintenance, landscaping, plumbing, and so forth. Stewards may be assigned to lead in meeting community needs, hospitality, fellowship, nursery care, communion preparation, and such like.

The following guidelines will help in conducting an effective official board meeting:

1. Have regular meetings incorporated in the church calendar.
2. Follow the adopted rules of order (*Robert’s Rules of Order*).
3. Prepare and distribute the agenda in advance. (Take note of any unfinished items or assignments noted in the minutes of previous meetings.) Input should come from the pastor, the pastor’s cabinet, chairpersons of boards and committees, and members who identify needs of the church. An early business item should be the adoption of the agenda.
4. Contact any persons or committee chairpersons who should make reports as a reminder with offer of any assistance they wish.
5. Begin the meeting with appropriate use of Scripture and prayer. It is also wise to share two or three positive answers to prayer in the life of the church over the past month. Start on a high note!
6. At the beginning of the meeting, set a time for adjournment.
7. Make certain the minutes of any previous meetings which have not been read and approved are presented and approved.
8. Receive reports from each leader and group represented on the official board.
9. When proposing items that are not ‘routine,’ it is often wise to announce that no vote will be taken on such item at this meeting. It is thus presented for discussion and the board is then given a month or more to

think and pray. This builds trust and morale.

10. See that accurate minutes are kept and approved.
11. Assign to persons or committees the implementation of all decisions.
12. Share significant official board actions with the congregation.

If difficulties are encountered in effectively training or leading the church through its official board, the pastor should consult the conference superintendent who is prepared to assist.

STRUCTURAL ALTERNATIVES

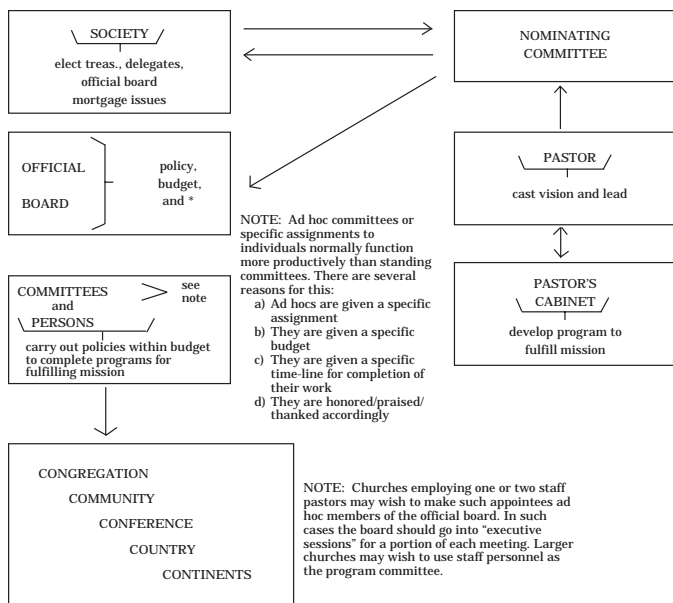
If the Free Methodist Church is going to fulfill its mission through the 90's and into the 21st Century, we will, among other things, be required to adjust structures for effectiveness and productivity. Below is an alternative structure which may be used to meet the objectives of the local church or conference:

The Society meets annually to:

1. Receive a report from the nominating committee to elect some required personnel
 - a. Treasurer
 - b. Delegate(s)
 - c. Official Board (expired terms) which also serves as the board of trustees
2. Receive a report from the official board to elect expired terms on the nominating committee (viz. the official board presents nominations to serve on the nominating committee).
3. Empower the official board to care for all other committees, personnel and business except the sale, purchase or mortgage of property.

The Official Board

1. In some cases the board may serve as the board of trustees and, including the treasurer and delegate(s), may also fulfill the function of all other committees except the nominating committee, or;
2. The board may wish to combine other committees into two or three such as Evangelism/Missions; Christian Education/Stewards/Social Action; Nominating Committee/Membership Care Committee/Pastor's Cabinet; etc., or;
3. The board may wish to function as all boards and committees except the nominating committee and assign individuals and/or groups to specific tasks for a certain period of time, or;
4. The board's primary function may be to set policy and formulate budgets designed to fulfill the mission of the church. (See accompanying graphic.)



The intention of the structure is to maintain focus, accomplish actual ministry, prevent overwhelming groups or individuals, providing for a sense of closure and allowing more workers to say “yes” to opportunities and, if the pastor and his/her cabinet are making assignment in harmony with the mission of the church, progress in mission will occur.

Simple structures give broad permissions to key leaders and allow the pastor to cast vision and lead to a desired future. The above alternative structure is designed to allow such to occur. So long as it does not violate the non-negotiables in the New Day-Permission/ Accountability Model, structure may be further adjusted or expanded to address local needs with approval from the conference superintendent. Conference structure may be similarly adjusted in consultation with the area bishop.

Approved by the Board of Bishops
February 21, 1996

PROPERTY

A. Maintenance

GOAL: Every Free Methodist Church illustrating to the community the highest standard of neatness in lawn, shrubbery, flower, inside and outside building care.

Any property owned and maintained by the Free Methodist Church is a witness to how seriously we take our worship of God and our stewardship of His tangible gifts. Both the design and maintenance of God's house, the tabernacle and then the temple in the Old Testament, were matters of meticulous concern to God as described in the detailed instructions He gave.

The maintenance and custodial care of our buildings should represent in a physical way our convictions about holiness and purity of life. Preaching clean living in a dirty or poorly maintained church is blatantly contradictory.

It is the responsibility of the pastor to encourage the board of trustees to annually inspect all buildings and to take the necessary steps for maintenance, improvement, and proper care.

A church building need not be either large or new to be an attractive incentive to worship. With care, and often volunteer help, the most modest structure can be made inviting and uplifting.

B. Building Program

A building program actually involves two simultaneous development strategies; spiritually building the congregation for new outreach and physically renovating existing or building a new facility to more adequately serve the community. Careful attention given to each ministry will contribute to the development of a spiritual climate in which the congregation can grow.

The entire membership should be involved in the society meeting which may elect a building committee or authorize the official board to name the committee. Consultation with the society on each major decision will assist in maintaining unity. According to the *Book of Discipline* the society must vote approval before any land is acquired. No indebtedness may be incurred without the approval of the society.

Professional architectural services will avoid many dangers and, in general, are worth the money invested. At the same time, an architect is only as valuable as the information he or she receives which defines the mission of the church. Simplicity in architecture has been a trademark of the Free Methodist Church (Par. A/859, Sec. 1) without sacrificing aesthetic qualities which enhance worship.

The *Book of Discipline* also requires that before property is acquired approval must be obtained from the conference committee on church buildings and locations (Par. A/859, Sec. 4). Before any financial campaign is launched, the services of the conference superintendent and/or the finance committee may be needed. Professional financial consultants and fund raisers usually provide significant help to churches entering major building programs. Be sure to select such consultants carefully by personally securing several recommendations.

The best building programs are preceded by months of careful planning, listening to ideas from departmental leaders, and prayerfully confronting each problem that arises, seeking always to know God's will. Seek much counsel in the development of plans to assure that all bases are covered.

C. Parsonage

The local church is responsible for providing housing for the pastor. In most cases, this means the building of a parsonage which is especially designed for that use and is not necessarily copied from a set of average house plans.

Some churches have decided to provide housing allowances for their pastor, thereby allowing private ownership of a home. This may prove to be acceptable, but the church should always keep in mind that the next pastor may not desire to own a home or may not have ready cash for the purchase of a home.

D. Selling or Mortgaging

Forms found in Par. B/1020, Sec. 1 of the *Book of Discipline* are to be used whenever property is to be mortgaged or sold. One of the questions refers to action taken by the society which requires the date of the society meeting and the page in the secretary's book where actions are recorded.

The following instructions will inform pastor and trustees of procedures necessary for meeting denominational and legal requirements:

THE SALE, PURCHASE, AND MORTGAGING OF CHURCH PROPERTY

According to the *Book of Discipline*
and the Instructions of the Board of Directors of
The Free Methodist Church of North America

Chapter VIII of the *Book of Discipline* presents regulations governing church property and the duties and responsibilities of the trustees of such property. Every trustee of church property and every official of the body electing the same should be thoroughly acquainted with this important chapter. Note especially:

1. The board of trustees of church property may not act in the purchase, sale, or mortgage of such property without specific authorization by its electing body. See Par. A/853.

2. Action by a board of trustees requires official vote in a regularly called session of the board. See Par. A/853.

3. A board of trustees may not accept a deed to property which contains a clause by which the property may revert to the original grantor, heirs or assigns, nor permit property to be sold or encumbered to meet current expenses. See Par. A/854.

4. Before a board of trustees proceeds to purchase real estate on the authorization of its electing body, it should secure the services of a reliable lawyer and provide a copy of the Free Methodist *Book of Discipline*. See Par. A/855.

5. The trust clause must be included in title to all church property. See Par. A/856.

6. Even when authorized by the electing body, the board of trustees must have the consent of the conference superintendent and of the Board of Directors of the general church to dispose of or encumber church property. See Par. A/857.

7. The proceeds of properly authorized sale or encumbrance of church property may be used only for purchase or improvement of property of the authorizing body, or held subject to due process as defined in Par. A/857.

8. Church property no longer used for church purposes must be declared abandoned by vote of the annual conference before local or conference trustees may sell it. See Par. A/858.

9. The Board of Directors of the general church cannot approve the sale or mortgaging of church property without prior authorization thereof in specific terms by the official body (society, circuit, conference, etc.) which elected the trustees of the property in question. Note the restrictions set forth in Par. A/412 and the first sentence of Par. A/853.

The selling or mortgaging of property are not routine business matters and cannot be delegated by blanket action.

10. If it becomes necessary between sessions of the annual conference to sell or encumber conference property upon which the conference has not taken required action, the conference administrative committee may attempt a solution through one of the following courses:

a. Request the Board of Directors of the general church to provide written assurance that it will issue a permit to sell or to encumber the property in question at such time as the annual conference votes its approval. If upon its judgment of the merits of the case, the Board of Directors gives such assurance, the administrative committee may be able to negotiate a contract with a prospective buyer or to encumber. However, before such contract can be legally fulfilled, the sale or mortgage must be approved by the following session of the annual conference.

b. Request the bishop of the annual conference to convene an adjourned sitting of the same to vote on the proposal to sell or mortgage the conference property in question. To save expense the adjourned sitting might be called, in conjunction with another scheduled conference event.

c. If a mail vote is considered appropriate the ballot should contain two sections: a) a consent to the mail vote, and b) a yes/no vote on the issue. A majority result on a) is necessary before the vote on b) may be considered official. For the record, a mail vote should be confirmed by action of the next regular sitting of conference.

Application forms for permission to sell or mortgage church property may be obtained from the conference office or from the Department of Administration and Finance at the World Ministries Center.

Board of Directors
The Free Methodist Church of North America
Free Methodist World Ministries Center
Indianapolis, Indiana 46253-5002

GUIDELINES FOR THE SELECTION, APPOINTMENT, AND CONTINUANCE OF PASTORAL STAFF ASSISTANTS

See Par. A/536 of the *Book of Discipline*.

UNITED MINISTRIES FOR CHRIST OVERVIEW

Since 1965 the unified budget approach of the Free Methodist Church has been a method by which each Free Methodist, by contributing through the local church, supports every facet of the worldwide ministry of the Free Methodist Church.

At that time, United Ministries for Christ (UMC) was a means by which the contributions sent from every church and conference in the United States are placed in the general fund and distributed to those approved ministries of the denomination according to predetermined budgets.

The 1985 General Conference adopted a significant change in the procedures, while at the same time calling for the United Ministries for Christ to continue as the “approved system for funding all the ministries of the general church.”

Since 1987 there have been two distinct plans for raising United Ministries for Christ funds: UMC-World Missions and UMC-Home Ministries. World Missions and Home Ministries dollars are raised separately but continue under the umbrella of United Ministries for Christ.

UMC-World Missions

This portion of the UMC involves a personalized support system for Free Methodist missionaries and their ministries. Conferences and local churches agree to support a missionary (or missionaries) at a specified amount with the expectation that the home support base will continue for the duration of their ministry under the Department of World Missions. All UMC-World Missions monies received for such support will be used exclusively for evangelizing and discipling people beyond our borders.

UMC-Home Ministries

The funding plan for UMC-Home Ministries is called Basic Support Shares. These shares are determined by applying a Board of Administration-approved formula to a conference’s total giving for the prior year. Each local church receives a portion of the accepted conference goal. Departmental budgets are based on the goals accepted by the conferences. Therefore, conferences and local churches are expected to reach these goals to avoid departmental deficits.

A. Budgets and the UMC Budget and Finance Committee

Budgets are necessary to facilitate good stewardship of the resources God has provided through His people.

Projected budgets for the several ministries receiving funds through UMC are presented to the United Ministries for Christ Budget and Finance Committee for review, determination of allocations, and recommendation to the Board of Administration for adoption.

United Ministries for Christ is dependent upon a steady flow of funds. Each conference is encouraged to submit one-twelfth of its UMC-World Missions Minimum Goal and UMC-Home Ministries Basic Support Share, each month.

The Operating Committee at the World Ministries Center prepares the Home Ministries budget and the Department of World Missions prepares the World Missions budget. These budgets are submitted to the Budget and Finance Committee for review, and, if necessary, revision. This committee is composed of ministers and laypersons from across the denomination. They work diligently to distribute fairly the funds available to the several ministries of the church. The budget is presented to the denominational Board of Administration for final approval.

B. Special Growth Projects

By action of the 1979 General Conference, it is possible to give to special projects above and beyond the United Ministries for Christ.

Special Growth Projects represent approved areas of ministry for which additional funds are needed over and above the basic UMC budgets.

All such projects have been approved by the Board of Administration. Money given to Special Growth Projects goes directly to those specific projects and is not allocated proportionately to other ministries. A list of special growth projects for both World Missions and Home Ministries is sent to pastors from the World Ministries Center each year.

The basic United Ministries for Christ budget must have priority in all promotional efforts. Special Growth Projects must be treated as special areas of ministry that do not compete with, but supplement, the UMC budget.

THE PENSION PLAN

The 1964 General Conference authorized the Board of Administration to develop a pension plan which could supplement Social Security for the ministers and employees of our church. The Board of

Administration immediately began to work on implementing a plan to provide protection and security to the people who contribute years of service in the work of the church. The plan was adopted and became effective January 1, 1969.

The Pension Plan was to be financed entirely by the church, no contributions being required or allowed from the participants. It was known as a “money purchase plan,” meaning that at retirement the participant would receive a monthly amount based on the purchase of an annuity limited according to the provision of the plan. While this was a positive step forward, it was soon evident that major adjustments were necessary to make it more beneficial to the participants.

The Pension Board, after careful study, recommended a revised plan to the Board of Administration, which was adopted in the spring board meeting of 1980, reviewed by the board in the fall meetings of that year, and became effective January 1, 1981.

The major revisions included a change from a “money purchase plan” to a “defined benefit” plan. The new plan is explained fully in material presented to each participant. The benefits have been weighted toward service to encourage and reward loyalty, while at the same time they make a small allowance for different compensation levels. Other goals achieved were uniformity of administration and a more adequate retirement supplementary income.

The plan sets a vesting schedule for participants to qualify for benefits. Benefits will vary according to annual salary, length of service, and age at time of retirement. Various options are available as one nears retirement.

The investments of the fund are handled by the Free Methodist Foundation.

It is mandatory that each local church participate in the plan. In so doing, they prove their cooperation in benefiting their pastors with added retirement security. Therefore, each church should recognize this obligation when setting the budget and instruct the treasurer to send payments promptly.

If at any time you have any questions about the plan, contact the pension agent in your conference or the Department of Human Resources at the World Ministries Center.

GUIDE TO SETTING HONORARIA FOR EVANGELISTS

Official boards sometime need help in setting a fair honorarium for the evangelist. The guidelines set forth below were studied by the committee of General Conference (1979), reviewed by the Commission on Evangelism, and passed by the Board of Administration. Since

evangelists are ordained of God, as clearly set forth in His Word, they are worthy of their hire.

Full-time general evangelists have a special calling from God (Ephesians 4:11-13) to perform a God-ordained ministry to our local churches. However, the evangelists are in a unique financial position. They must pay their own housing, utilities, car allowance, and at least one half of their insurance, pension and social security. Evangelists are not normally scheduled at holiday seasons nor during most summer months, except camp meetings. Furthermore, they have no paid vacations as do local church pastors. Most evangelists can expect income for only eight or nine months a year.

In contrast to local pastors, evangelists do not receive salary during illness or emergency leave. They forego such perks as expense money for retreats, seminars, annual conference, books and office supplies.

The following financial guidelines are standard throughout holiness denominations. If these guidelines are followed the evangelist will receive a salary comparable to the pastor's salary for the week.

Pastor's Weekly Salary	_____
Cash Benefits (housing, utilities, etc.)	_____
Social Security	_____
Total	_____
Multiply x 2	_____

This is the amount you should pay the evangelist for a week or partial week of service. Engaging an evangelist over two Sundays constitutes two weeks even if ministry covers only eight days.

PASTORAL ETHICS

The exhortation of the Apostle Paul, "... set an example for the believers ..." (1 Timothy 4:12, NIV), is one that every minister must take seriously. Moral integrity must never be compromised by lack of complete honesty; breach of vows to spouse, family, church, and country, nor by indiscreet actions toward the opposite sex. Debts are to be paid when due. The pastor must be self-disciplined, not allowing even the appearance of evil. Actions speak louder than words. The strongest sermon ever preached is in the life lived. Even thoughts need to be cleansed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

You and your fellow pastors make up the conference team. Your colleagues deserve your support. Be affirming. Let no layperson ever hear from your lips critical comments concerning another pastor.

Be ready to help new and younger pastors who come to your

conference. Respect and honor those who are older and have given years of their lives for the ministry.

One of the strongest encouragements to conference unity is the practice of pastors praying one for another on a daily basis. Apply the Golden Rule in your relationships, endeavoring always to treat fellow pastors as you would have them treat you.

As you accept the responsibilities of a new congregation, speak affirmatively of your predecessor, acknowledging contributions and strengths. Closest friends of the former pastor will soon be your supporters. Build your ministry on your own strengths.

When leaving a congregation, make the transition as easy for your successor and spouse as possible. Introduce them personally to the leaders of the church and community. Do not return to your former pastorate except when absolutely necessary.

Avoid conducting funerals and weddings where you have previously served without full knowledge and consent of the incumbent pastor. If it becomes necessary, always involve the present pastor in the service. If for some reason you are going to be in the community, inform the pastor of your presence. Let the people know you are not there in a pastoral role.

Paul continues: "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 4:16, NIV).

CODE OF ETHICS FOR MINISTERS OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH

Personal Standards

I will endeavor at all times to be conscious of the sacredness of my calling.

I will endeavor prayerfully to deepen my commitment to Christ and constantly live this commitment before all in perfect love.

I will endeavor to give adequate time in developing my intellectual capacities, in keeping abreast of current thought, and in preparing my messages.

I will endeavor to keep my body physically fit.

I will endeavor to give full-time attention to my ministerial duties.

I will endeavor to maintain a high moral standard in speech and conduct, and be decorous in manners and dress.

I will endeavor to act above reproach in all business and financial matters, and incur no debts that would embarrass me or my church.

I will endeavor to present a balance of truth tactfully and constructively.

I will endeavor to acknowledge the influence of others upon my life and ministry, and give due credit to resource materials used.

I will endeavor to regulate the demeanor of my own family.

Pastoral Standards

I will accept a pastorate as a sacred obligation and faithfully perform all my duties until released.

I will be a spiritual shepherd of all my people and endeavor to be a shepherd to those who do not have one.

I will preach the gospel of salvation and entire sanctification with love and patience.

I will endeavor to act above reproach in the performance of my personal duties.

I will regard my service as primary, my remuneration as secondary.

I will keep confidences inviolate.

I will represent the Free Methodist Church in my community and be a messenger of good will and unity in the spirit of Christ.

I will leave the church records and property in good order when my responsibilities are terminated.

Professional Standards

I will respect the pastorate of another minister and render service only in emergencies or with the consent of the assigned minister.

I will seek to enhance the work of another minister.

I will deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and successor.

I will be enthusiastic about and promote the mission of the Free Methodist Church.

In the event of a change in my doctrinal position or if for any other reason I find myself no longer in harmony or sympathy with the Free Methodist Church, I will voluntarily withdraw from the conference and church in the spirit of Christ endeavoring to protect the best interests of both the local and general church.

Adopted by the 1974 General Conference

RELATIONSHIP TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Pastors in the Free Methodist Church are employed by and amenable to an annual conference. They hold membership in the conference, are elected to orders and ordained by the annual conference, and are under its assignment.

Such a relationship provides opportunities for wider ministries through participation in conference outreach initiatives. Here pastors

can use their special gifts to even greater advantage for the building of the church. Pastors find renewal and instruction in working with other pastors and laypersons who share similar concerns.

Loyalty to the conference and its ministries is a responsibility to be taken seriously. Free Methodist pastors are expected to demonstrate loyalty to their superintendent and group leader, and to the ministries of their conference and denomination.

While fulfilling responsibilities to the conference, a pastor must maintain proper balance between it and the pastoral work in the local church. The latter is of primary importance. Successful pastors will help their church to participate in the larger outreach of the conference and denomination.

EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONNEL WITH CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP

The Free Methodist Church is a connectional church. Since our founding in 1860, we have provided for leadership in our churches through an annual conference appointment system. In addition to approximately 1,200 appointed pastors, a large number of ordained persons are either assigned to some special work relating to the general needs of the church or are released for work outside the church.

There is, and has always been, a movement of pastors between conferences. Furthermore, employment by the general church or associated bodies provides a steady flow in and out of pastoral ministry.

We must recognize and accept this movement. It is both ethical and legal to transfer from one conference to another. At the same time it is necessary to observe certain guidelines which are accepted and respected by all.

A. Governing Principles

1. Annual conference membership is a central principle in historical Methodist ecclesiology. Workers are called, nurtured, trained, and ordained for service in the annual conference. Their character and work are annually reviewed. Both the privileges and responsibilities of conference membership are to be respected. In harmony with this system, the *Book of Discipline* insists on ample notification prior to transferring (Par. A/533, Sec. 4).

2. The good of the kingdom and the growth and welfare of the Free Methodist Church is a major concern for all people involved in staffing the work. Pastors and superintendents are asked to forego personal benefits for the good of the whole.

3. At the same time the interests of the person employed are of great importance. The pastor's personal development, happiness, and

effectiveness in ministry are of concern. What is best for the individual will be viewed differently, depending on one's perspective. Thus, every person choosing a field of labor should be free from undue pressure.

While the above considerations are all important, they seem at times to conflict. At such times the will of the Lord must be sought through both the ministerial appointments committee and the individual's sensitivity to divine leading. We can find our way through these matters if we observe the Christian virtues of openness, mutual trust, mutual respect for persons, and respect for the polity of the church.

B. Specific Guidelines:

1. A minister desiring to transfer to another conference, institution, or work for the general church, should understand that no serious consideration will be given by the prospective employer without contact with the present superintendent/employer. The current employer in every case will be one of the transferee's references.

2. Many contacts regarding employment are not made directly, but are initiated by a third party who knows something of the minister's skills and intentions. A discreet inquiry may be made regarding possible interest. It should not be pursued further, however, until the present superintendent/employer is notified that consideration is being given to the potential transferee. It is advisable in all such cases for the superintendent to confer with the area bishop as chairman of the ministerial appointments committee.

3. The above will also apply when a person is being considered for a general church or other strategic leadership position.

4. The sixty-day notification rule will be observed unless suspended by mutual agreement between the transferee and superintendent/employer involved.

5. After faithfully observing the guidelines, the transferee shall be free to make the final decision and should not be subject to undue pressure from either the present or prospective employer. Annual conferences and/or boards of ministerial education and guidance will not refuse a request for a certificate of standing unless there are charges against the character of the transferee. All transfers into annual conferences are subject to the vote of the receiving conference.

6. The above procedures apply only to full members of an annual conference. Conference ministerial candidates may transfer, see Par. A/533, but are not allowed to transfer their license as a conference ministerial candidate.

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR FREE METHODIST MINISTERS

A. Purpose

The purpose of continuing education for ministers in the Free Methodist Church is the development and maintenance of skills necessary for a balanced and growing ministry.

B. Definition

Continuing education refers to learning experiences chosen to enhance one's ministry. Such experiences may be either for academic credit or non-credit. Academic credit refers to collegiate studies whereas non-credit experiences are called Continuing Education Units (CEU). One CEU requires ten contact hours of learning. The CEU may be earned in fractions depending on the number of contact hours.

C. Approval

Each conference will maintain a list of approved events for CEU credits. Events not listed on the approved list must be cleared in advance by the conference superintendent.

D. Choice

The pastor, in consultation with the superintendent, plans his/her continuing education for a one-to-three or one-to-four-year time period. Advance planning will assist in relating personal CEU programs to the perceived needs of the individual. This includes a perception of self as well as that of the conference superintendent and laity.

A list of suggested learning experiences is found in sections J and K below. From time to time, added suggestions will be forwarded to conference superintendents. Your ideas and suggestions are welcome.

When possible, provision should be made for including the spouse in the learning experience.

E. Finances

Churches and annual conferences are expected to arrange financial assistance for their ministers to participate regularly in continuing educational experiences.

F. Records

Individuals may obtain an "Event Certificate" from the conference office or Ministerial Credentialing Services, P.O. Box 535002, Indianapolis, IN, 46253-5002. The Event Certificate must be completed and sent to the conference superintendent for signature. The conference office will forward the information to Ministerial Credentialing Services to be recorded.

G. Certificates

1. Studies for academic credit will receive recognition upon

completion through the regular channels of the educational institution involved.

2. Continuing Education Units (non-academic) successfully completed will receive recognition by an appropriate certificate issued by Ministerial Credentialing Services.

3. Upon completion of 10 CEUs, a certificate of recognition will be presented at the annual conference by the MEG Board.

H. Authorization

Paragraphs A/416, Sec. 5, and B/479 of the 1995 *Book of Discipline* give instructions on continuing education.

I. Topic Areas

Areas to be covered in the plan of continuing education for ministers are found in the Christian ideal of knowing God, knowing self, knowing people, and knowing the minister's task.

1. Knowing God: Ministers are expected to maintain a disciplined and meaningful personal devotional life. They will lead the congregation in worship experiences. Suggested continuing education topics include:

- a. Personal Spiritual Growth
 - (1) Personal Spiritual Discipline
 - (2) Effective Prayer
- b. Biblical Studies and Theology
- c. Worship and Music
 - (1) Planning Worship Services
 - (2) Creative Approaches in Worship
 - (3) The Function of Music in Worship

2. Knowing Yourself: This includes the minister's family responsibilities, time management, and the handling of stress. The development of personal maturity is essential to effective ministry. Pastors must have a "pastor" or consultant with whom they can build a relationship in order to counsel in times of stress.

Suggested topics:

- a. Developing Personal Maturity
- b. Personal Inventory Analysis
- c. Time Management
- d. Stress Management
- e. Marriage and Family Enrichment
- f. Parenting
- g. Self-improvement Skills
- h. Ministerial Ethics
- i. Personal Finance

3. Knowing People: Ministers utilize interpersonal and motivational skills in building upon the strengths of others while developing team work and leadership (Ephesians 4:11).

Suggested topics:

- a. Studies of Psychology
- b. The Development of Interpersonal Relationships
- c. Personnel Administration
- d. Church Management
- e. Mental Health

4. Knowing the Minister's Task: Ministers should be fully aware of the biblical role of the ministry in order to maximize their skills in the fulfillment of this role.

Topics to be covered:

- a. Preaching Skills
- b. Evangelism and Church Growth
- c. Comprehensive Knowledge of Denominational Heritage
- e. Denominational Perspective (Doctrine)
- f. Organization and Finance
- g. Stewardship
- h. Leadership Skills
- i. Evangelism and Discipleship
- j. Community Involvement
- k. Christian Education
- l. Missions
- m. Higher Education
- n. Certified Educational and Missionary Tours

J. Learning Experiences

The Free Methodist Church through its colleges, seminaries, and education programs provides basic learning experiences which may be supplemented by nondenominational programs. Pastors will desire to give priority to programs under Free Methodist auspices.

The learning experiences must be under the auspices of a recognized organization.

K. Resources

Church resources:

- continuing education study at World Ministries Center
- travel-study experiences
- church-growth seminars
- schools of renewal

College-church resources:

- regional ministers' conferences that utilize a "learning mode"
- accredited correspondence work

Church-university, seminary resources:

- credit work from an area Free Methodist college, university, or John Wesley Seminary Foundation
- non-credit work from area institution
- directed study programs in conjunction with college, university, or seminary

Local or regional resource agencies:

- university extension
- community classes
- videotape seminars
- mental health
- free university study
- writing courses
- Dale Carnegie course

National resources:

- Billy Graham Schools of Evangelism
- National Association of Evangelicals workshops
- Christian Holiness Association seminars
- National Religious Broadcasters workshops

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR FREE METHODIST SEMINARIANS

John Wesley Seminary Foundation Program

The John Wesley Seminary Foundation (JWSF) exists to provide guidance, counsel, and financial assistance to graduate students preparing for full-time ministry in the Free Methodist Church. There is a foundation office at each of the approved graduate schools, Asbury Theological Seminary (Kentucky), C.P. Haggard School of Theology/Azusa Pacific University (California), Wesley Biblical Seminary (Mississippi), Western Evangelical Seminary (Oregon), Greenville College (Illinois), and the seminary at Roberts Wesleyan College (New York).

The foundation provides financial assistance to qualified applicants through the UMC-Home Ministries budget. An applicant must be a conference ministerial candidate, or beyond, and in the admissions process for a masters degree in biblical, theological, or pastoral studies at one of the approved JWSF institutions. The assistance must be paid back either by five years of full-time service in the Free Methodist Church or by a conventional financial plan. Further information on the JWSF program, including application procedures, is available through the Department of Leadership Development (formerly Department of Higher Education), P.O. Box 535002, Indianapolis, IN 46253-5002.

Individual members of the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions (AFMEI), comprised of Azusa Pacific University (California), Central College (Kansas), Greenville College (Illinois), Roberts Wesleyan College (New York), Seattle Pacific University (Washington), and Spring Arbor College (Michigan), may award scholarships to Free Methodist students. Pastors are encouraged to contact the admissions office at each of the AFMEI schools for current

information. For toll free numbers contact the Department Leadership Development at 1-800-342-5531.

PREPARING FOR YOUR SUCCESSOR

A distinguishing characteristic of a successful pastor is the ability to build upon the strengths of one's predecessor. Another is the ability to prepare for an orderly transfer of leadership to a successor.

The pastor who follows you will carry on your good work much more readily if your preparation for transition is both thoughtful and thorough.

Upon arrival the new pastor should have immediate access to the following:

A. Looking Ahead

The current statement of mission and a synopsis of the short-term and long-term goals presently guiding the total ministry of the church.

B. Membership Information

1. The official membership book in which all entries and addresses are up-to-date in each category.

2. The outreach/contact list, sometimes called a "Love-Care" list. The *Light and Life* magazine subscription list should be included.

3. If not included above, a list of all families with occupation and place of employment with names and ages of children.

C. Lists

A complete list of all trustees, officers, leaders, membership of boards and committees, teachers, lay ministers, and local ministerial candidates of the church with terms of office where applicable.

D. Plant Operation

1. Location of keys to: doors, closets, PA system, organ, church vehicles, etc.

or:

2. List of persons responsible for all buildings and grounds and related operations.

E. Program

1. Sample of the Sunday bulletin and midweek letter.

2. Church calendar.

3. Copy of minutes of recent meetings of all major boards and committees.

4. Index to plans and correspondence relating to special events planned for the future.

5. Sample packet of materials being used in advertising, visitation, evangelism, discipling, small group ministry, etc.

F. Pastoral Care

1. Pastor's calling list or file with notations concerning shut-ins, unique family situations, best time to call, and spiritual needs.
2. An area map indicating location of members.

G. Finance and Business

1. Copy of the current budget and the most recent audit.
2. Instructions on how the pastor's salary is paid.
3. Record of where all deeds, insurance policies, incorporation papers, and other documents are kept.
4. The file containing contractual agreements, job descriptions, evaluations and salary scale for all employed staff persons.

H. Community

1. Map of the area.
2. List of community agencies with whom the church maintains a relationship, especially those to which referrals are made.
3. List of area ministers with whom the pastor works, along with time and place of ministerial association meetings.
4. Description of all union meetings and cooperative efforts among churches in which the Free Methodist church has participated.
5. Suggested plan for key lay leaders to introduce the pastor to community leaders.

I. Personal

1. Referrals to competent health care people, i.e. doctor, dentist, optometrist.
2. Tips on how to cope with the physical eccentricities of the church and parsonage. (For example, the location of fuse boxes, hard-to-find switches, storm window storage, furnace filters, etc.)
3. Recommendation of best places to shop and the location of a reliable auto repair garage.
4. Explain how utilities function: Are deposits necessary? Is sewer cost included in the water bill?
5. Vacation time and time-away schedule approved by the official board.

Preparing for your successor offers an excellent opportunity for demonstrating the Golden Rule. By anticipating your own transition to the next appointment, then planning carefully for the pastor who follows, you will establish a pattern of practical thoughtfulness worthy of emulation.

(Adapted and condensed from *Ministerial Ethics and Etiquette for Ministers of the East Michigan Conference*, by Dale A. Woods)

GLOSSARY

Anthem

Sacred choral composition or song of praise usually taken from the Scriptures.

Antiphonal

Devotional verses or song responsively read or sung.

Benediction

Literally the “good word,” a brief blessing used to dismiss a congregation at the conclusion of a worship service; not, strictly speaking, a prayer.

Canticle

From the French *canere* — to sing; biblical hymn or song other than the psalms.

Celebrant

One who performs a public religious rite, particularly the Lord’s Supper.

Chancel

The front part of the sanctuary including altar, pulpit, communion table, and choir loft.

Choral Response

Music sung by a choir or chorus in response to spoken parts of worship.

Collect

Literally, a gathering together of ideas focused upon the purpose of the worship event. An opening prayer or prayers.

Credentials

In the ecclesiastical sense, a minister’s ordination certificate(s).

Deacon

Literally, a servant or minister; the first of two levels of ordination in the Free Methodist Church.

Dossal

Also *dorsal* or *dosser*; an ornamental cloth hung behind the altar or pulpit.

Elder

The second of two ordinations in the Free Methodist Church.

Eucharist

Literally, to show favor or to give thanks; the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

Extemporaneous

Spoken with preparation but not written or memorized.

Gospel Song

Religious song which usually depicts some aspect of personal Christian experience.

Homily

A discourse or sermon prepared in detail but usually shorter than a sermon.

Hymn

An ode or song in praise or adoration of God.

Introit

Literally, to go into; a hymn or anthem sung or played at the beginning of a worship service.

Invocation

A short prayer offered at the beginning of a service inviting the presence of God.

Lectionary

A collection of Scripture lessons for use on specific days in divine worship. Often sets forth selections for every Sunday of the year or may cover several years. Used to assure broad exposure to all of Scripture.

Lectern

A reading desk, in some churches, from which the Scripture lessons are read.

Litany

A series of invocations and supplications usually spoken alternately by clergy and congregation.

Narthex

The vestibule or foyer of a church.

Nave

The larger area of the sanctuary where the worshipers are seated.

Offertory

Prayer said before or after, or music rendered during, the receiving of an offering.

Offertory Sentence

A brief statement in either prose, verse, or Scripture given by the minister to introduce the offering.

Officiant

An officiating minister.

Orders

The several grades or ranks of the Christian ministry.

Ordinand

A candidate to be received into the order of deacon or elder.

*Parament**

Ecclesiastical vestment or hanging.

Parchments

In the ecclesiastical sense, a document certifying a minister's ordination.

Parish

The territory in which the members of a congregation live, also the members of the congregation without regard to their location.

Postlude

Music at the close of a worship service.

*Processional**

Hymn sung during the entrance of choir and clergy.

Prudentials

Guidelines to Christian behavior reasoned from principles in Scripture and confirmed by consensus of the church.

*Recessional**

Hymn sung during the departure of choir and clergy from the sanctuary.

Ritual

The form of conducting worship.

Transept

That part of the church at right angle to the sanctuary aisles directly in front of the chancel or altar. Usually found only in cathedrals built in the shape of a cross.

Vestibule

A passage or hall between the outer and inner doors of a building.

*Vestment**

A liturgical garment of the ceremonial attire and insignia worn by ministers during the divine service as appropriate to the occasion and indicative of their ecclesiastical rank.

**Distinctive to liturgical churches and not ordinarily used by non-liturgical bodies.*

THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH ~ NEW DAY ~ UNITED IN MISSION; TOGETHER IN HARVEST

The mission of the Free Methodist Church is to make known to all people everywhere God's call to wholeness through forgiveness and holiness in Jesus Christ and to invite into membership and equip for ministry all who respond in faith.

1. The chart below represents the Board of Bishops' commitment to placing mission ahead of method.
2. Responsibility for leadership in achieving the expected outcomes rests with the pastor.
3. Below are expressed the parameters and outcomes expected in every Free Methodist Church.

Non-negotiables	Leadership Initiatives	Expected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not live in violation of the Scriptures. • May not live in violation of the Articles of Religion, the membership covenant, or the mission of the Free Methodist Church. • May not live in violation of ordination vows. • May not lead the church in ways which detract from our mission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastors and churches are free to strategize and minister in ways which produce the expected outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every local church a worshipping community. • Every local church an enfolding congregation producing disciplined, growing, holy people. • Every local church a reproducing congregation. • Every local church regularly reaching the lost for Christ. • Every local church engaged in our world missionary movement. • Every local church ministering to the poor and disenfranchised. • Every local church bringing structures into the service of its mission.

A CALL TO ACTION

Addressed to the Church

In order for the Free Methodist Church to achieve its destiny under God, we must rid ourselves of spiritual lethargy. We must allow the God of power to direct us as we end the 20th century and enter the next. We, as leaders gathered here in St. Petersburg, Florida, on December 10, 1995, commit ourselves and call our people to:

1. **SALVATION:** Celebrating the forgiveness of sins, freedom from shame and guilt, cleansing from the power of sin by the Holy Spirit, and the assurance of salvation;
2. **PRAYER:** Calling ourselves to the practice of prayer, recognizing our total dependence on God for the revival, health and growth of His church;
3. **SCRIPTURE:** Understanding and obeying the Word of God for growth and wholeness in Him;
4. **OBEDIENCE:** Obeying joyfully the Lordship of Christ and ruling out any form of casual Christian living;
5. **WORSHIP:** Experiencing the presence of God through worship which is pleasing to Him and meaningful to the people;
6. **COMMUNITY:** Pursuing a climate of love and trust which makes possible partnership in our common mission;
7. **RECONCILIATION:** Laying aside all prejudice and bigotry and taking the Gospel and love of Jesus to people of all groups and every level of society, leading them to the knowledge of Christ and to full incorporation into His church;
8. **LEADERSHIP:** Honoring the God ordained role of leadership in the church and carefully identifying, developing, and supporting gifted and competent women and men who are called to lead;
9. **MISSIONS:** Pledging ourselves to the global mission of the church ministering worldwide the goodness and grace of Jesus Christ;
10. **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Fulfilling our mission to the glory of God with excellence and careful accountability.

12/10/95

A SOCIAL, URBAN AND ETHNIC AGENDA FOR THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN THE NINETIES

The agenda given here is both a description and a strategy. It describes social and demographic realities to which the Church in the nineties must respond. It also challenges the Church, under God, to redemptive applications of the Great Commission in its world. It seeks to integrate evangelism and social justice into a pattern of kingdom obedience.

Is this a comprehensive New Day agenda, including all that the church can do? The answer is no, because this is a focused document. As a focused document, it deals particularly with only certain aspects of the church's life.

Can this agenda bring vitality to the whole church? The answer is yes, because, on the other hand, every aspect of the church's life will be touched as an extension of these challenges.

1. **The future of the Free Methodist Church (as of our society in general) is increasingly an urban, culturally diverse future.** The church prepares for its future by examining the opportunities, obstacles and characteristics of an increasingly urban and multi-ethnic church. This future belongs to those who adequately prepare for it.
2. **The Free Methodist Church cherishes the growing cultural, ethnic and racial diversity of our church.** Cultural diversity and urbanism will be reflected in all denominational materials, media and events.
3. **As Free Methodists, we are recovering the profound biblical convictions on social consciousness, which are part of our history.** We rejoice in our heritage, rejoice to make it known, and rejoice to live it in today's world.
4. **The challenge before Free Methodists is to face the reality of ingrained cultural prejudice, paternalism, and sexism.** All sectors of the church are encouraged to embark on a course of education for acceptance of those who are racially or culturally different.
5. Recognizing that the world is shrinking and there are global dimensions to social, urban and ethnic ministry, **overseas missions and North American ethnic ministries will network in planning initiatives within linguistic groups and in productive exchange of leadership.** The World Fellowship and the Area Fellowships can contribute to this system.
6. **Ethnic/urban/minority leadership development are a priority of the church.** Recruitment, cultivation and training of these leaders will be accelerated. (Increased resources will be devoted to providing opportunity for the development of ethnic/minority and urban leadership with a minimum of social dislocation.)
7. **Regional metropolitan strategies are being developed** to allow groups of churches in a major metropolitan area to network,

strategize and give mutual support. Such strategies encompass the whole metropolitan unit from the inner city to suburbia, and generate awareness of movements and trends within that geographical area. The advantage of this plan is to move problem solving strategy and initiatives closer to the operational arena so that urban, ethnic, and suburban churches are working together to reach the whole metropolitan area for Christ.

8. **The thrust of social, urban, ethnic ministries is in church planting.** A portion of the new churches planted in the 1990s will be urban and/or ethnic. City churches in difficulty and urban/suburban churches in transitional neighborhoods are candidates for re-birth, essentially as new church plants. The techniques of new church planting are more appropriate to these situations than any revitalization strategies currently known.
9. **Successful models of social, urban and ethnic ministries are being analyzed and the insights shared.** We focus on winners and share the news. We plan to invest creativity, personnel and financial resources to create successful models of our own.
10. **New Free Methodist Social Service agencies will be launched to meet people's felt needs as an integral part of evangelism.** These new agencies will be a part of metropolitan strategies, working hand in hand with local churches. A social service agency may serve as the beachhead to establish and multiply new churches in cities without a Free Methodist witness. The Olive Branch Mission in Chicago is a model that could be "franchised" all across the country.
11. **Every local church is challenged to get involved in some significant, intentional social ministry to their community as a part of their outreach to the world.**
12. **Social, urban, and ethnic ministries carry the gospel into many strongholds of evil and thereby require vigorous prayer, great faith in God and the overcoming power of the Holy Spirit.** Direct power encounters with evil seem to occur more frequently and more violently in these circumstances, therefore prayer support like that focused on world missions is necessary to undergird social, urban, and ethnic ministries in the United States.